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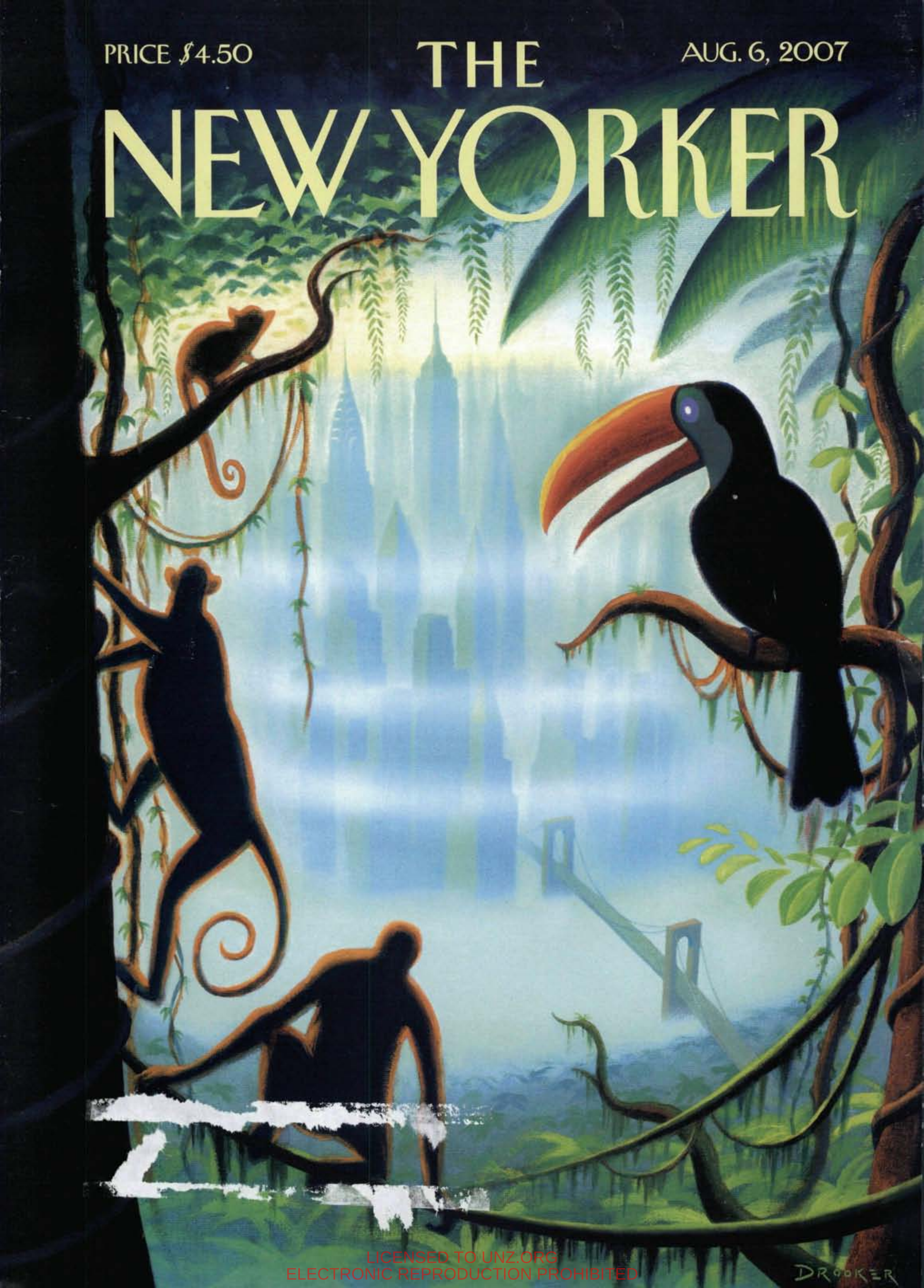

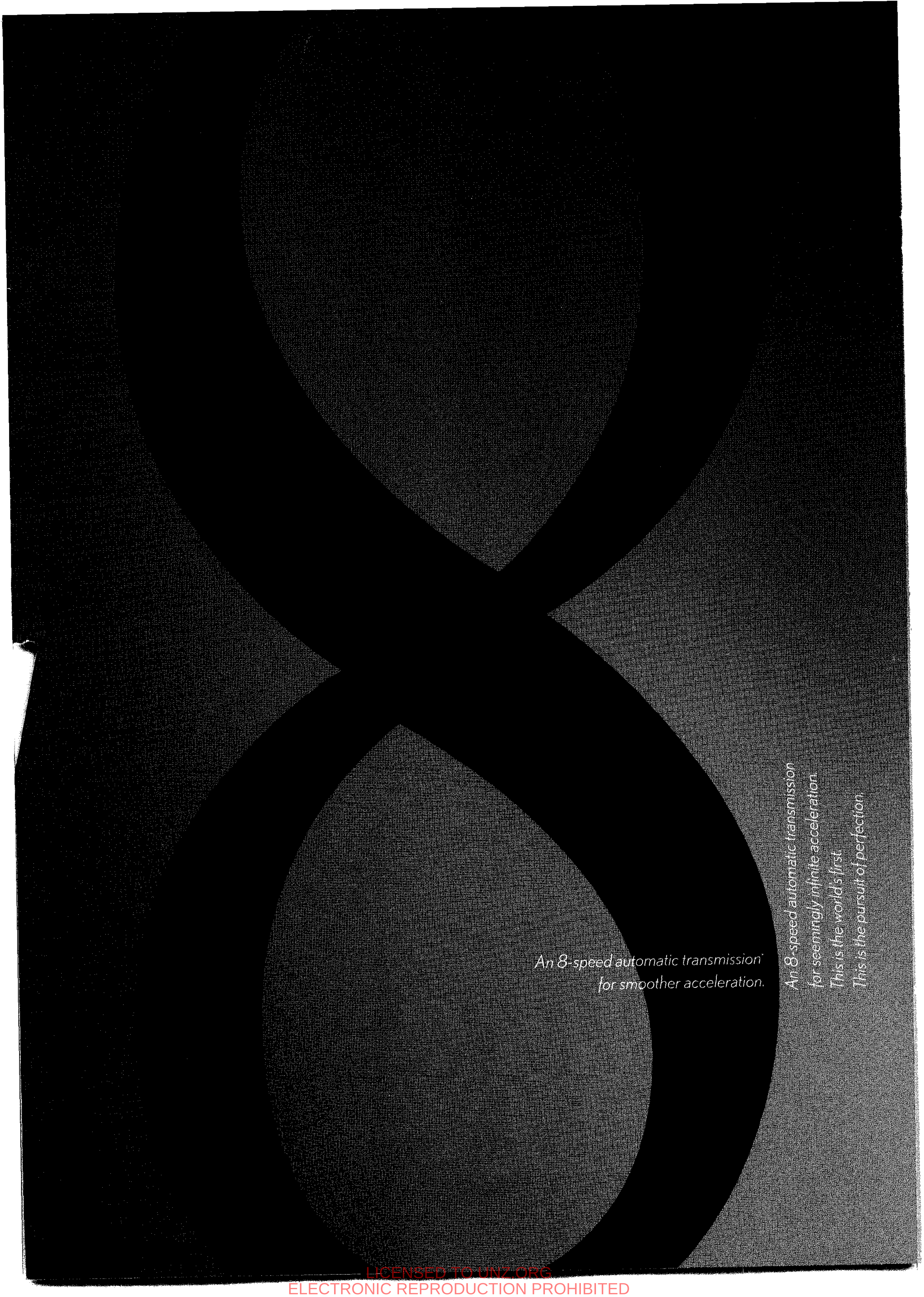
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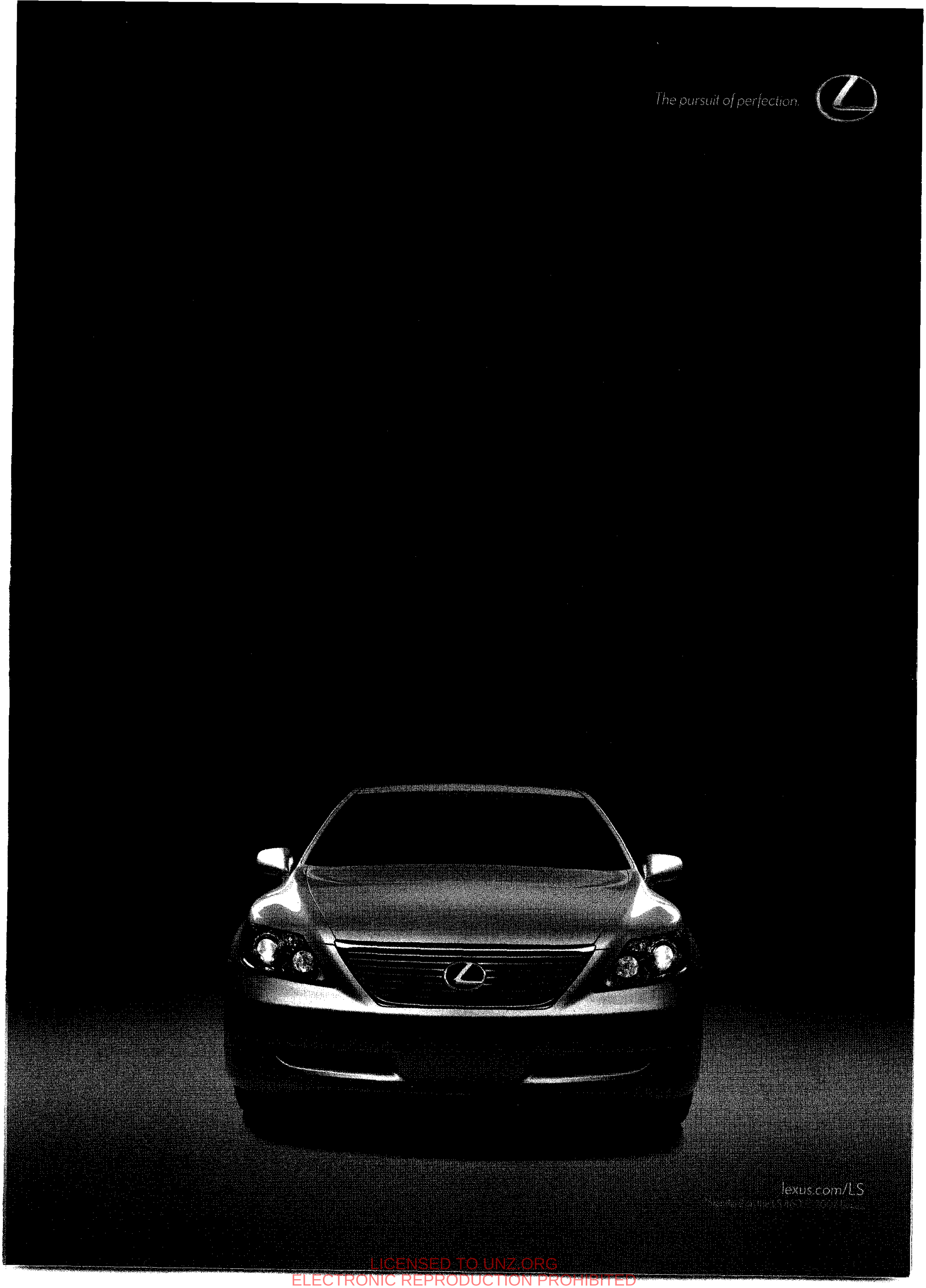
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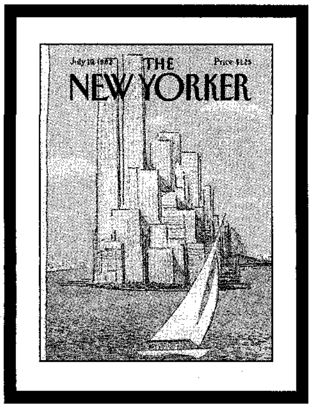

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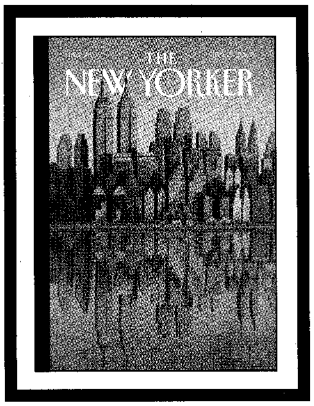

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THE NEW YORKER

AUGUST 6, 2007

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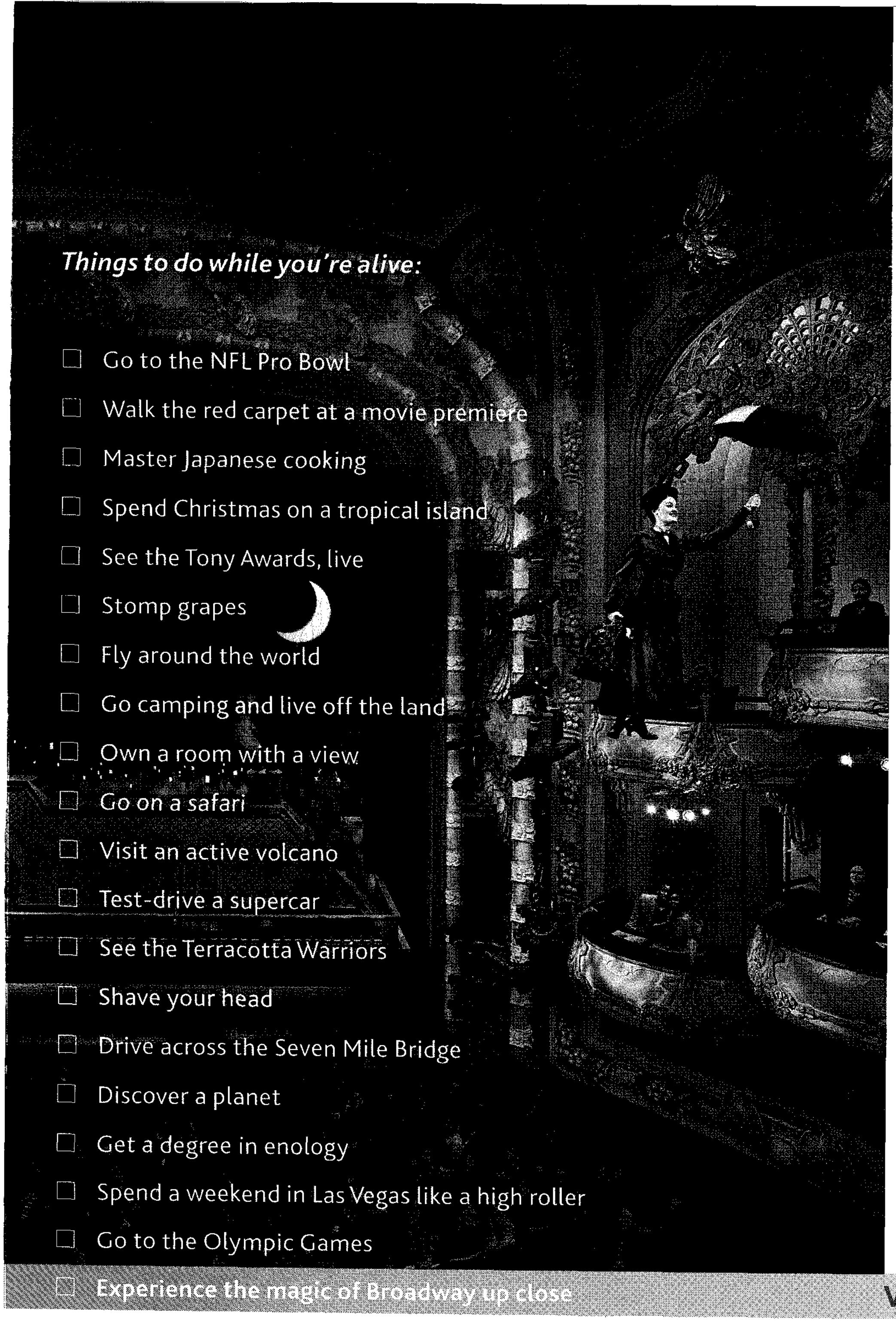LIFE
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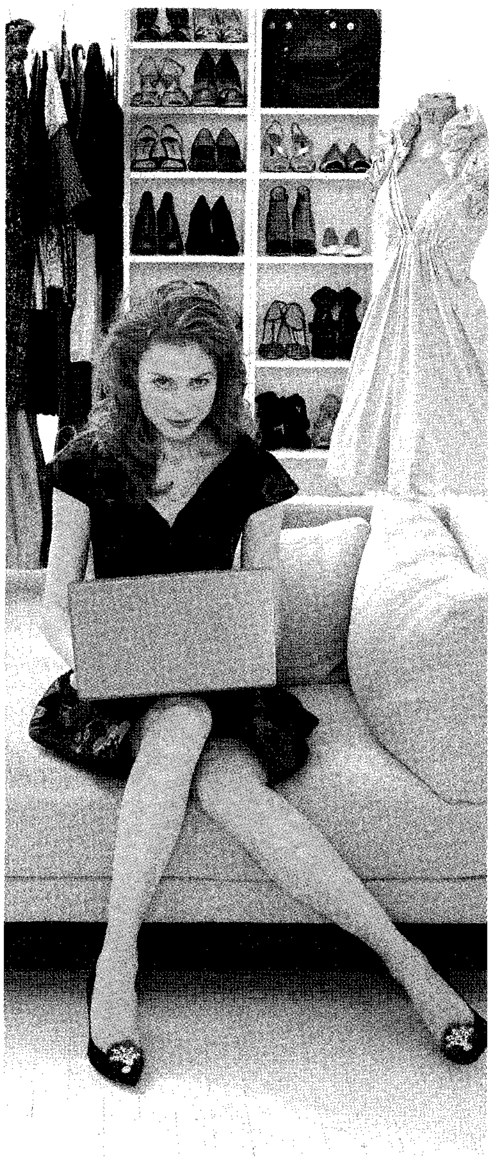

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Jorie Graham (Poem, p. 46) has published ten poetry collections, including "The Dream of the United Field," for which she won a Pulitzer Prize, and "Overlord."

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Eric Drooker (Cover) is the author of "Flood!," a novel in pictures, a new edition of which was published in April. He is also the illustrator of "Illuminated Poems," by Allen Ginsberg.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM
An audio slide show with *Elizabeth Kolbert* talking about beekeeping and colony-collapse disorder. / Interesting Times, a blog by *George Packer.* / More paintings by Gerald Murphy, photographs of the Murphys' circle, and *Calvin Tomkins's* 1962 Profile. / Also from the archives: *Peter Schjeldahl* on a Meryle Secrest biography, *David Denby* on the Bourne films, and more. / A slide show of *New Yorker* covers from summers past. / The Film File: thousands of capsule reviews, going back to 1990. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events around the country.

THE MAIL

FOR BETTER HEALTH

Atul Gawande's discussion of American health-care politics provides a provocative, but at times incomplete, view of the problems in American health care (Comment, July 23rd). While reforms in the way we pay for care may be necessary, such reforms will not likely be sufficient to address the broad inequities in access to care in the United States. Gawande notes that emergency rooms are "clotted with the uninsured," but, as we and others have shown, the insurance status of visitors to emergency rooms closely mirrors that of the general population. In fact, the largest increase in use of emergency rooms over the past decade has been among insured persons, and is most likely due to the failure of the health-care system to provide adequate access to care, irrespective of the availability of insurance. Without an effort to assure that systems of care are accessible, of high quality, and efficient, simply reforming the payment system will not likely give us our money's worth as measured by the health of our population.

Jonathan Showstack
Professor of Medicine and Health Policy

Ellen J. Weber, M.D.
Clinical Professor of Medicine
School of Medicine
University of California, San Francisco
San Francisco, Calif.

EARLY WHALING

Caleb Crain's review of Eric Jay Dolin's "Leviathan," a history of American whaling, relates the author's doubt that "anyone in what is now the United States" hunted whales "before Europeans arrived" (Books, July 23rd). However, there is convincing archeological and ethnological evidence that numerous Native American peoples engaged in whale hunting before European contact or influence. The Ozette site on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington state is one of the clearest examples. This Makah village dates back to around 500 A.D.; it was engulfed in a landslide around 1500, which preserved many examples of pre-European whale-hunting equipment. Other aboriginal peoples of the U.S. Pacific Northwest, including Quinault and Quileute, established a "whaling cult," marked by extensive ritual and mythology. Ethnological reports of Aleut and Inuit (Eskimo) whale hunting off the coast of Alaska abound, and records by the earliest English colonists on Long Island in the mid-seventeenth century strongly suggest preëxisting indigenous Shinnecock, Montaukett, and other coastal Algonquian whaling.

Peter M. Whiteley
Curator of North American Ethnology
American Museum of Natural History
New York City

PREDICTION PROBLEMS

James Surowiecki's account of using prediction markets overlooks what is most distinctive about predictions when they concern human social life: once such predictions circulate, they shape what it is they claim to forecast (The Financial Page, July 9th & 16th). If a publisher exclusively relies on MediaPredict, the publisher will tend to choose not to publish works judged negatively by MediaPredict's prediction market. In such cases, the failure of the non-published works will have been not forecasted but fabricated. Further, if all, and not just some, publishing decisions were determined by such a prediction market, the forecasting powers of the prediction market would be vitiated. Publishers would publish only works projected to be hits, but since consumers would be distributing their purchases among a pool consisting only of such works, many would be flops.

Daniel A. Segal
Claremont, Calif.

•

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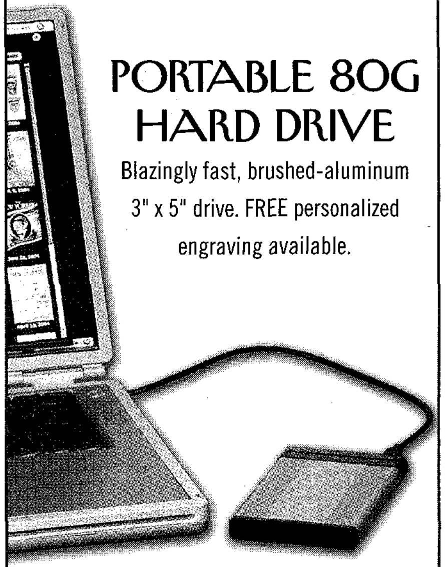

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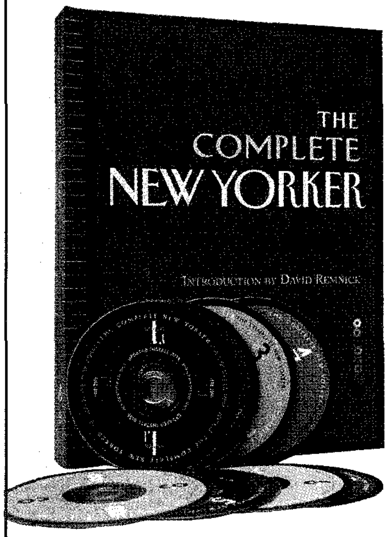

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The floating pool in Brooklyn Bridge Park. Photograph by Brian Finke.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
BY MOONLIGHT

Shakespeare in the Park continues its season with "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The cast includes Martha Plimpton, Tim Blake Nelson, Daniel Oreskes, and Laila Robins; Daniel Sullivan ("Rabbit Hole," "Proof") directs. (See page 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
ACROSS THE BORDER

In the early eighties, Stan Ridgway, as the lead singer of the off-center New Wave act Wall of Voodoo, landed on the pop charts with the hit song "Mexican Radio." This week he's at the Highline Ballroom, celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the band's album "Call of the West." (See page 9.)

ART
URBAN JUNGLE

The German Expressionist painter Ernst Ludwig Kirchner had an eye for the sordid glamour of street life and a fascination with primitivism. The new show "Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Berlin Street Scene," at the Neue Galerie, centers on his vivid, frenetic masterpiece from 1912. (See page 12.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
MOSTLY BEETHOVEN

In this year's Mostly Mozart Festival, the Salzburg genius gets stiff competition from two other composers. The opening concerts feature not only Mozart's Symphony No. 36 ("Linz") but also Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto (with the pianist Paul Lewis) and the New York première of Osvaldo Golijov's "Azul" (with the cellist Alisa Weilerstein). (See page 14.)

MOVIES
THE WILD CHILD

Starting in the nineteen-seventies, the French actor Gérard Depardieu took up the mantle of Jean Gabin as a sensitive, wounded hulk who exudes brutality and tenderness in equal measure. Like a golden-age Hollywood star, Depardieu has always remained Depardieu, whether immersed in costume drama (as in Andrzej Wajda's "Danton," from 1983) or appearing as himself (as in Marguerite Duras's "The Truck," from 1977). Walter Reade presents a three-week series of many of his most celebrated movies. (See page 19.)

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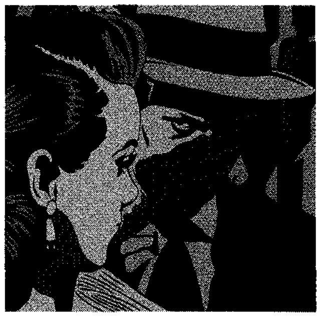
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
SEX AND POLITICS

Among the many good films playing in Film Forum's "NYC Noir" series, Samuel Fuller's "Pickup on South Street" (Aug. 1-2), from 1953, is one of the best. Fuller, a onetime soldier and crime reporter who wrote, produced, and directed his own movies, offers more than the usual noir artifacts—a nighttime city, psychotic villains and heroes, low-angle shots, sullen standing around, and quick violence. Fuller also presents an encompassing view of life, in which everyone survives from moment to moment by bottom-dog instinct combined with entrepreneurial daring. Call it capitalist existentialism, as seen from the standpoint of the sewer. Richard Widmark plays a petty gangster and pickpocket who lifts a wallet from an ex-whore (Jean Peters) and finds himself in possession of government secrets wanted by both Communists and federal authorities. The dialogue is brutal and insinuating, the sexual tension thrilling, the economy of the storytelling and editing incomparable. With Richard Kiley as a Communist agent and Thelma Ritter as a city rat who lives by selling information and dreadful neckties.

—*David Denby*



MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ELECTION DAY
Josh Tobiessen wrote this dark satire, about a political campaign and one potential voter. Jeremy Dobrish directs. Opens Aug. 1. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-246-4422.)

GREASE
Kathleen Marshall directs and choreographs this revival of the musical, starring Laura Osnes and Max Crumm. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

THE HANGING OF RAZOR BROWN
The première of a drama by Le Wilhelm, in which a French teacher and her students discover a noose while on a picnic. Previews begin Aug. 2. Opens Aug. 5. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

HUMAN ERROR
The world première of a drama by Keith Reddin, about the aftermath of a plane crash. Directed by Tracy Brigden. In previews. (Atlantic Stage 2, at 330 W. 16th St. 212-279-4200.)

IDOL: THE MUSICAL
A new musical about small-town teen-agers who are obsessed with Clay Aiken. Daniel Tursi directs. In previews. (45th Street Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 212-868-4444.)

IPHIGENIA 2.0
Signature Theatre Company opens the season with a New York première of a play by Charles Mee, inspired by Euripides' tale of Agamemnon, who had to convince his followers that a costly war was worth it. Previews begin Aug. 7. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
Shakespeare in the Park's second production of the season stars Martha Plimpton, Tim Blake Nelson, Laila Robins, and Jay O. Sanders. Previews begin Aug. 7. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
The Drilling Company presents Shakespeare's comedy, in a parking lot on the Lower East Side. Admission is free. Opens Aug. 2. (Municipal Parking Lot, at Ludlow and Broome Sts. 212-877-0099.)

OPUS
Primary Stages opens its season with this play by Michael Hollinger, about a string quartet that gains a new member. In previews. Opens Aug. 7. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE RECRUITING OFFICER
New York Classical Theatre presents George Farquhar's comedy from 1706, about a corrupt, carousing captain, performed, for free, in Central Park. In previews. Opens Aug. 2. (103rd St. at Central Park W. 212-252-4531.)

ROMEO AND JULIET
Classical Theatre of Harlem mounts a contemporary rendition of the romantic tragedy, complete with hip-hop and R. & B. music. Admission is free. Aug. 3-4. (Marcus Garvey Park, Mount Morris Park W. at 124th St. 212-360-8290.)

THE TEMPEST
Harlem Summer Shakespeare presents free performances of Shakespeare's drama. Opens Aug. 2. (Riverbank State Park, 145th St. at Riverside Dr. 212-695-1596.)

TINGS DEY HAPPEN
Dan Hoyle's one-man show examines the clashing geopolitical forces in Nigeria and the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea region. In previews. Opens Aug. 7. (Culture Project, 55 Mercer St. 212-352-3101.)

NOW PLAYING

ANGRY YOUNG WOMEN IN LOW-RISE JEANS WITH HIGH-CLASS ISSUES
Matt Morillo, a comedy writer from Long Island, directs his own series of sketches about the conundrums facing contemporary urban hotties—namely, thong underwear, bikini waxes, bad boyfriends, and late feminism. Though the language is blue, the skits have the good-natured mildness of network television comedy. The best thing about these meandering riffs is the pitch-perfect dialogue that Morillo writes for the men in the ladies' lives: mystified young guys in generic jeans who prefer not to think about their issues. (Players Theatre, 115 MacDougal St. 212-352-3101.)

THE BLACK EYED
A new play by Betty Shamieh, about four Arab women from different eras who meet in the afterlife. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

EURYDICE
Sarah Ruhl's luminous retelling of the Orpheus myth from his beloved wife's point of view is exhilarating. The singular, surreal world of the play is as lush and limpid as an anxiety dream of love and loss, in which both author and audience swim in the magical, sometimes menacing, and always thrilling flow of the unconscious. (Reviewed in our issue of 7/2/07.) (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

GONE MISSING
The Civilians' documentary-theatre piece, based on interviews conducted by the troupe and compiled by Steven Cosson, captures the funny and inescapably poignant details that emerge when you ask people about the things they've lost, like a shoe, body parts, memory, a Palm Pilot dropped in the panic of 9/11. The stories are punctuated by genre-hopping songs by Michael Friedman, and the actors—six of them, in snappy gray suits—provide evocative characterizations in quick succession, insuring that the variations-on-a-theme approach never gets old. (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200.)

"ICE FACTORY '07"
The Ohio Theatre hosts the SoHo Think Tank's annual festival of new work, presented by companies such as New Georges and Rindfleisch. (66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444.)

MASKED
The Israeli playwright Ilan Hatsor wrote this drama, about three Palestinian brothers living through the intifada. Ami Dayan directs. (DR2, at 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

MIDTOWN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL
Dozens of new plays and musicals are mounted in this festival, including works by John Guare, Michael Lazan, and Anne Stockton. (Various venues. For more information, visit www.midtownfestival.org. Through Aug. 5.)

MY FIRST TIME
Four actors perform monologues, based on interviews with hundreds of people, about losing one's virginity. Directed by Ken Davenport (who co-conceived "Altar Boyz"). (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

SEUSSICAL
Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty's musical, which went the way of so much green eggs and ham when it was produced on Broadway, in 2000, feels quite at home at the Lucille Lortel in Theatreworks U.S.A.'s condensed staging. At a brisk and satisfying eighty-five minutes, Horton the Elephant (Brian Michael Hoffman) has just enough time to hear a Who, hatch an egg, and think a few thinks (in song, of course) before the lights come up. And Marcia Milgrom Dodge's direction is in the spirit of the doctor himself, who always left something to the imagination; most of the costumes merely hint at the animals they signify, showing kids that stagecraft doesn't have to be literal to be evocative. (121 Christopher St. For information, call 212-332-0001.)

SUMMER PLAY FESTIVAL
This annual festival presents sixteen works from up-and-coming playwrights. (Theatre Row, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through Aug. 5.)

TOM CREAN: ANTARCTIC EXPLORER
The Galway-born actor and playwright Aidan Dooley finely creates a crusty, unpretentious man of courage in his one-man play about Crean, a his-

torical figure who served on the Endurance from 1914 to 1916 under the leadership of Sir Ernest Shackleton. Though he never became famous, Crean won medals upon his return to England for his fortitude in surviving all sorts of extremities on his trek; he also managed to save several others, who surely would have frozen to death otherwise. Dooley nails the physical details, from the layers of cotton Burberry wrappings Crean wears to the way a man's gums turn black with blood as the frostbite spreads. Dooley's script has a homespun raconteur's rhythm that's not without its scratchy pleasures, or its occasional longueurs. (Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

XANADU
A ridiculously brilliant, lavish, and sublime confection inspired by the 1980 movie musical, about a Greek Muse who materializes out of a mural painted on a wall in Venice, California, and befriends an artist called Sonny, whom she inspires to open a roller disco. The playwright, Douglas Carter Beane, retained the film's basic plot, but he streamlined its action and transformed its lazy camp into something more intelligently suggestive. Far sleazier and cheesier than conventional musical theatre, it points out just how tame most other musicals are. (7/23/07) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

OUT OF TOWN

BARD SUMMERSCAPE
Ken Roht and his Orphean Circus headline the Spiegeltent. Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Sorcerer," directed by Erica Schmidt, opens Aug. 3. (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900.)

BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
Julie Jensen's play "Two-Headed" follows Mormon women living in a polygamist community in the late eighteen-hundreds. Vivian Matalon directs "Morning's at Seven," Paul Osborn's comedy about a small-town family in the thirties. For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. (Stockbridge, Mass. 413-298-5576.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
On the tented outdoor stage at Boscobel, "Richard III," directed by Terrence O'Brien, plays in repertory with "As You Like It," directed by Kurt Rhoads. For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. (Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575.)

WILLIAMSTOWN THEATRE FESTIVAL
Christopher Ashley directs the world première of "Party Come Here," a musical comedy set in Rio, through Aug. 5. Kate Burton, Ginnifer Goodwin, and Dylan Baker star in "The Corn Is Green," by Emlyn Williams, about a teacher in a Welsh mining town. For a full schedule, visit www.wtfestival.org. (Williamstown, Mass. 413-597-3400.)

Also Playing

ABSINTHE: Pier 17, South Street Seaport. 212-279-4200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE BRIG:** Living Theatre, 19-21 Clinton St. 212-352-3101. **CHICAGO:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **A CHORUS LINE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COLOR PURPLE:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **CURTAINS:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DEUCE:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **FROST/NIXON:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **LEGALLY BLONDE THE MUSICAL:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **THE LION KING:** Minskoff, 220 W. 45th St. 212-307-4747. **MARY POPPINS:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **OLD ACQUAINTANCE:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **THE PEOPLE VS. MONA:** Abingdon, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444. Through Aug. 4. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **LA VIE:** Pier 17, South Street Seaport. 212-279-4200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100. **THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—Aug. 2: The bluegrass nightingale **Alison Krauss** swings by with her impeccable band, Union Station, featuring the Dobro virtuoso **Jerry Douglas.** Aug. 3: **Squeeze.** Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook, the Lennon and McCartney of New Wave, have reunited the eighties pop powerhouse that gave the world such gems as "Tempted," "Black Coffee in Bed," and "Hourglass." With the local Beatle-esque combo **Fountains of Wayne.** Aug. 6: **Joe Walsh.** From his days with the James Gang to his time with the Eagles, this rock-and-roll icon made his name with incendiary guitar playing.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Aug. 2: Inspired by the grunge sound of the nineties, **Fiction Plane** is a high-energy British rock trio whose lead singer, Joe Sumner, happens to be Sting's son. One might assume that Sumner would attempt to distance himself from his father's legacy, but the fact that his band's name is an anagram of Infant Police suggests otherwise. Oh, also, Fiction Plane is opening for the Police on their current tour (see Giants Stadium and Madison Square Garden).

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—Aug. 2: The Brooklyn-based Brave New World Repertory Theatre follows up last year's staging of "The Great White Hope" with **"Walt Whitman: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,"** a multimedia theatrical adaptation of Whitman's famous poem from "Leaves of Grass." **Jenny Scheinman** and her rollicking new quartet (see Joe's Pub) open. Aug. 3: A night of enlightened hip-hop, with **KRS-One, Ladybug Mecca,** and others. Aug. 4: **Kassav'** is the Paris-based band that popularized zouk, a hybrid of Caribbean dance music, funk, and French pop. Opening is Brooklyn's Gaston Jean-Baptiste, the Haitian drum master known as **Bonga,** who often mixes Afro-Haitian rhythms with elements of jazz, blues, and funk.

GIANTS STADIUM
The Meadowlands, East Rutherford, N.J. (212-307-7171)—Aug. 5: The **Police.** Although a reunion seemed entirely out of the question after years of acrimony, the pop juggernaut has defied the odds and mounted what is promising to be a staggeringly lucrative tour. But the question remains: how long can the détente last? Catch them now before they split up again. With **Fiction Plane** (see the Bowery Ballroom).

HIGHLINE BALLROOM
431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—Aug. 1: **Vieux Farka Touré,** the son of the Malian superstar Ali Farka Touré, follows in his father's footsteps, playing a fierce African blues guitar. Aug. 4: **Stan Ridgway,** the front man for the early-eighties MTV favorites Wall of Voodoo, celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of "Call of the West," the album that spawned the group's most notable contribution to popular culture, the hit single "Mexican Radio."

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Aug. 6: The composer and violinist **Jenny Scheinman's** new quartet, informally named Mischief and Mayhem, features two of her cohorts from the Scott Amendola Band, the guitarist **Nels Cline** and the bassist **Todd Sickafoose,** along with the drummer **Jim Black.** Cline and Black are kindred spirits in energy and sound ,who have wanted to collaborate for years, and were finally given the chance when Scheinman willed the ensemble into being for one of her regular gigs at Barbès, in Brooklyn, recently. Expect pure magic from the alchemical mixture of folk-influenced avant-jazz compositions, droning soundscapes, and exuberant, rock-infused improvisations.

TABLES FOR TWO
ZIPPER FACTORY TAVERN

336 W. 37th St. (212-695-4600)—This screwy gastropub is a recent addendum to the Zipper Theatre, a playhouse occupying an old zipper factory on the desolate periphery of the garment district. You can get a drink to take in while you see the show—cabaret, burlesque trapeze, Margaret Cho. The tavern itself has two floors, three bars, and two rows of stage lights, and is cluttered with so much prop-shop bric-a-brac—bulls' horns, an antique iron, an album cover for "Music to Help You Stop Smoking"—that you may feel as if you are on the set of a play about an eccentric new restaurant in an old zipper factory.

In homage to the neighborhood, the tavern serves its own artisanal sausages and other charcuterie, along with homemade sauerkraut and mustard (and, in the same vein, some gummy potato pierogi). The meats aren't bad—it's hard to quibble with bratwurst or fatty slabs of bacon. But the Zipper happens to be across the street from the headquarters of M. & T. Pretzel, the city's hot-dog-cart kings, and one wonders whether it might be as gratifying, and less laborious, to grab a water dog from one of the returning venders. The menu nods in a dozen other directions—conch salad here, sloppy joe there—and you may find yourself exclaiming, as a diner did on a recent evening, "This place is all over the place." Some of these places were very nice. The Zipper salad (beets, peas, greens, mizuna) was delicate and fine, and unlikely to be duplicated over at M. & T. A block of monkfish, with fava beans and chunks of chorizo, had agreeable heft.

Enthusiasm for these and other dishes, as well as for the bar's wide selection of Scotch, tequila, and beer, led to some messy meal-sharing, and, by diner's end, a tablecloth you could sign and hang on the wall. "*We're* all over the place," the diner amended. The waiter didn't seem to mind: it was a slow summer-holiday night, and he and his colleagues had been sneaking tequila shots. The bill came tucked inside an old thrift-store hardcover, "Quite Unexpected," by Ismay Thorn, which suggested that the feeling, whatever it was, may have been mutual. (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner and Saturdays for dinner; Sundays for dinner after Labor Day. Entrées $14-$17.)

—Nick Paumgarten

LINCOLN CENTER OUT OF DOORS
The free performances on the grounds of Manhattan's temple of high culture get under way on Aug. 2 with two veterans of the sixties: everybody's favorite folksinger, **Arlo Guthrie,** and the Puerto Rican vocalist **Roy Brown.** (Damrosch Park Bandshell.) Aug. 5: The pianist **Dave Brubeck** may be in his eighties, but he can still get a crowd going with such perennial jazz anthems as "Take Five" and "Blue Rondo à la Turk." (Damrosch Park Bandshell.) (For more information, visit www.lincolncenter.org. Through Aug. 27.)

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. (212-307-7171)—Aug. 1 and Aug. 3: The **Police** and **Fiction Plane** (see Giants Stadium). Aug. 6: England's **Muse** finally won over previously baffled American audiences last year with its fourth album, "Black Holes and Revelations." Its robustly operatic, metallic prog rock combines the dramatic flourish of vintage Queen with the futuristic malaise of Radiohead. Aug. 7: The **B. B. King Blues Festival** brings the guitar master himself, the soul legend **Al Green,** and the great blues singer **Etta James** to the WaMu Theatre here.

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL
Aug. 1: The veteran soul and gospel singer **Mavis Staples.** (Rockefeller Park, Battery Park City.) Aug. 2: The **Flatlanders** brought together three friends from West Texas—Joe Ely, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, and Butch Hancock—for a brief moment in the early seventies. The band's legend has grown over the years, and its members have established individual reputations as singers and songwriters. After reuniting briefly, in the late nineties, to contribute to the soundtrack for the film "The Horse Whisperer," the gang has returned to the road, recapturing the promise of their youth. (Castle Clinton, Battery Park.) Aug. 3: Old meets new, with seductive results, in an evening titled "Billie Holiday Remixed and Reimagined." As with the new album of the same name, it features **Nickodemus, Jazzy Nice,** and **Nappy G** with members of the Groove Collective. (Pier 17, South Street Seaport.) Aug. 4: The local Afrobeat orchestra **Antibalas** plays an afternoon show on Governors Island. (For more information, visit www.rivertorivernyc.com.)

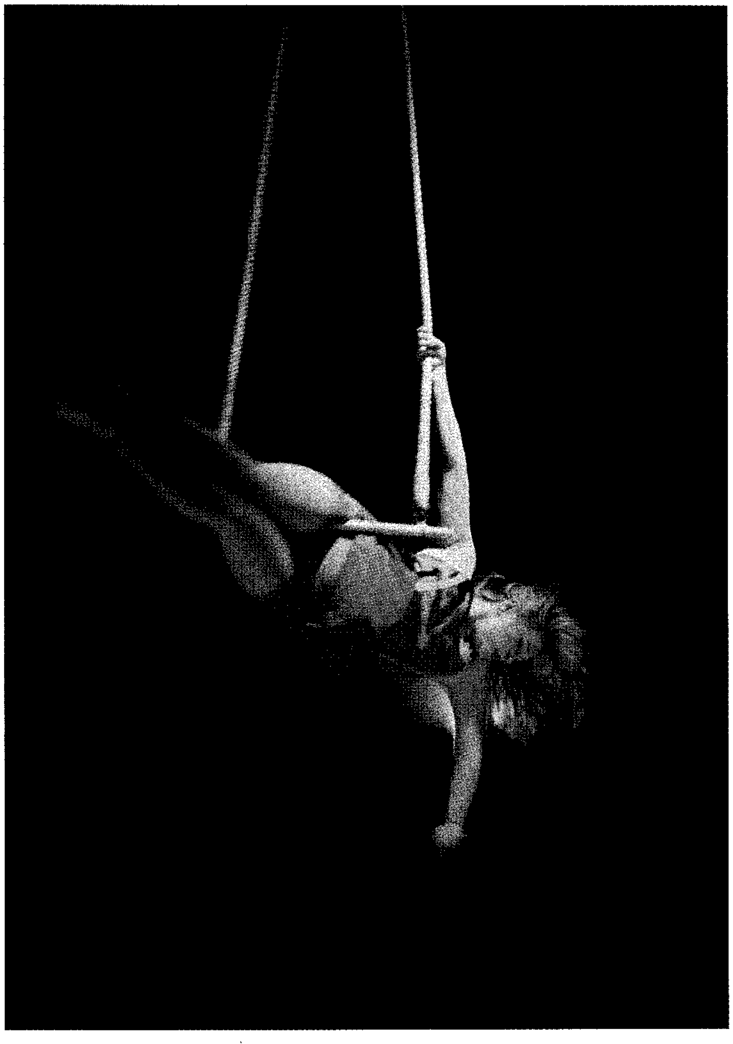
SPIEGELTENT
Pier 17, South Street Seaport (212-279-4200)—Aug. 7-8: **Lila Downs,** whose mother was a Mixtec singer from Mexico and whose father was an American academic, has studied opera and anthropology, and her music addresses feminism, civil rights, and the plight of Mexican immigrants. Her latest album, "La Cantina (Entre Copa y Copa)," from last year, is a rootsy affair, full of *ranchera* songs accompanied by the accordionist Flaco Jimenez.

STUDIO B
259 Banker St., Greenpoint, Brooklyn (718-389-1880)—Aug. 3: **CSS,** an artsy coed ensemble from São Paulo that approaches dance rock with an old-fashioned punk attitude. (The members claim that they didn't know how to play their instruments when they first got together, a few years ago.) They specialize in bubbly guitar-and-synth-fuelled English-language romps. With the homespun modern-rock sound of Brooklyn's **Dirty on Purpose** and the excessive Edmonton dance rockers the **Shout Out Out Out Out.** (They have two drummers, four bass players, two samplers, and five synthesizers.)

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Aug. 7: The raucous local trio the **Yeah Yeah Yeahs,** who are led by the extravagant singer Karen O.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Aug. 1-4: The **Lew Tabackin** trio will stir fond memories of the now defunct Toshiko Akiyoshi Big Band: it's fronted by that acclaimed ensemble's chief soloist, the saxophonist Tabackin, with **Toshiko Akiyoshi** on piano.



"La Vie," a burlesque show in the Spiegeltent at South Street Seaport.

RHONA BITNER

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Aug. 2-4: The **Duke Ellington Orchestra** is still a family business: Duke's grandson Paul Mercer Ellington is now running the band. Aug. 5: Led by the saxophonist **Anat Cohen,** the **Waverly Seven** reinterpret the signature tunes of the rocking crooner Bobby Darin.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—July 31-Aug. 5: The **Cedar Walton** quartet, with **Vincent Herring.** Decorous bop piano meets impassioned bop saxophone. Walton, a respected keyboard veteran noted for his work with Art Blakey in the mid-sixties, brings a world of experience and his superior compositions to the table. Herring, for his part, has fervor and an increasing maturity as a modernist improviser.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Aug. 2-5: In the jazz-guitar world, **Stanley Jordan** stands out for his astonishing technique. It's been a while since his last recording, but, when it comes to this wizard, there's nothing like seeing him perform live. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

ISSUE PROJECT ROOM
232 3rd St., at 3rd Ave., 3rd fl., Brooklyn. (718-330-0313)—After two years in residence in a former oil silo on the Gowanus Canal, this nonprofit organization dedicated to experimental culture has moved to new digs, a large, sanctuary-like space in Brooklyn's Old American Can Factory. Left unchanged is the exciting and diverse programming that filters through the sixteen-channel, hemispherical-speaker sound system. The space and the speakers will be put to excellent use on Aug. 3, when the guitarists **Nels Cline** (see Joe's Pub) and **Elliott Sharp** perform intimate improvised duets to celebrate the release of "Duo Milano," their new half-acoustic, half-electric album.

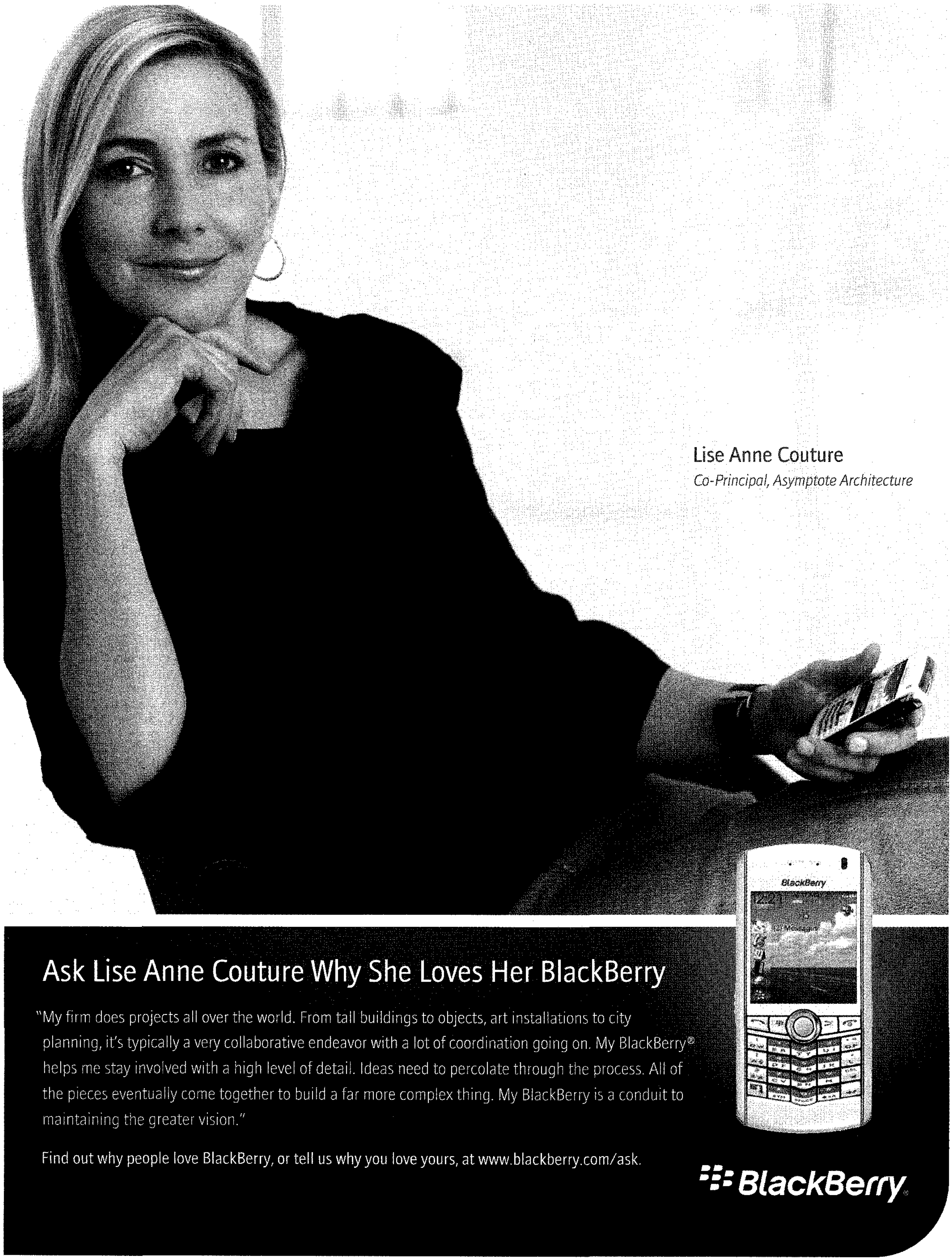
JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Aug. 3-5: **Abdullah Ibrahim's** early-eighties septet may have been the perfect vehicle for this gifted South African-born pianist, composer, and bandleader, but he's now making the most of a seasoned trio to produce the slow, rolling grooves that are his trademark.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—July 31-Aug. 5: The **Uri Caine** trio. The pianist Caine has his hands in a million imaginative projects, from evoking turn-of-the-century New York ghetto life to remolding classics by composers from Bach to Mahler. Compared with those grand doings, this compact group, with the bassist **James Genus** and the drummer **Ben Perowsky,** may seem limited in ambition, but Caine can still be expected to shake things up.

ART MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Poiret: King of Fashion,"** a survey of the career of the Parisian designer Paul Poiret (1879-1944), is at the Costume Institute through Aug. 5. ♦ **"Neo Rauch at the Met: Para"** presents new paintings by the Leipzig-based artist. Through Oct. 14. ♦ **"Impressionist and Early Modern Paintings: The Clark Brothers Collect."** Through Aug. 19. ♦ **"Frank Stella on the Roof."** Through Oct. 28. ♦ **"Frank Stella: Painting Into Architecture"** presents the prolific artist's designs for architectural structures. Through Aug. 5. ♦ **"One of a Kind: The Studio Craft Movement."** Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Richard Serra Sculpture: Forty Years."** Through Sept. 10. ♦ **"Picasso's 'Demoiselles d'Avignon' at 100."** Through Aug. 27. **"Present Tense: Photographs by JoAnn Verburg."** Through Nov. 5. ♦ A primer on the minimal and post-minimal line in all its severe glory, **"Lines, Grids, Stains, Words"** begins with a draw-



Lise Anne Couture

Co-Principal, Asymptote Architecture

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ing by Ellsworth Kelly from 1949 and ends with one by Martin Creed from 2004. In between, the focus is on the sixties and seventies (with a flareup in the nineties). Examples of art made by women in periods usually considered to have been dominated by men are notable; works on paper by Eva Hesse, Hanne Darboven, Howardena Pindell, and Cady Noland stand side by side with pieces by the likes of Donald Judd, Mel Bochner, Rudolf Stingel, and Mark Lombardi. Through Oct. 22. ♦ **"Automatic Update."** Through Sept. 3. ♦ **"Projects 85: Dan Perjovschi."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Barry Frydlender: Place and Time."** Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8. The museum will be open until 9 on Thursday evenings through Aug. 30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—The telescoping spiral of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim rotunda is in the midst of a summerlong restoration, so it's a timely moment to consider how geometry sculpts the void. **"The Shapes of Space"** culls works from the permanent collection and is evolving over the summer, moving upward as the renovation progresses. Through Sept. 5. ♦ **"Divisionism/Neo-Impressionism: Arcadia and Anarchy."** Through Aug. 6. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—Luxury and ruin keep close company in **"Rudolf Stingel."** Through Oct. 14. ♦ **"Summer of Love: Art of the Psychedelic Era."** Through Sept. 16. ♦ **"Lincoln Kirstein"** honors the late, great aesthete, connoisseur, and impresario on the centenary of his birth, with an exhibition of work by artists he championed, including Walker Evans, Elie Nadelman, and Pavel Tchelitchew. Through Aug. 27. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Gold."** Through Aug. 19. ♦ **"Mythic Creatures: Dragons, Unicorns, and Mermaids."** Through Jan. 6. ♦ The recently opened Anne and Bernard Spitzer Hall of Human Origins explores the science of evolution. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**"Condensation: Five Video Works by Chen Chieh-jen."** In the stark, staged videos of the Taipei artist—making his U.S. museum début—the ubiquitous label "Made in Taiwan" has a dark side. Factories appear abandoned, an office clerk sleeps at his desk in an otherwise deserted skyscraper, and an aggrieved-looking group of Taiwanese dockworkers enact a symbolic protest. The showstopper, however, is Chen's first video, made in 2002, a tableau vivant based on an early-twentieth-century French photograph of a Chinese *lingchi* execution. Projected on three screens, we see mercifully little of the "thousand cuts" carnage and much of the condemned man's face, blinking through an opium-smoke haze. What should be a gruesome spectacle feels instead like an ecstatic rite—a disconcerting effect that may explain why Georges Bataille reproduced that same French photograph in his 1961 book, "The Tears of Eros." Through Aug. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
1109 Fifth Ave., at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Dateline Israel: New Photography and Video Art."** Through Aug. 5. ♦ **"The Sculpture of Louise Nevelson: Constructing a Legend."** Through Sept. 16. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"From Berlin to Broadway: The Ebb Bequest of Modern German and Austrian Drawings."** Through Sept. 2. ♦ Federico da Montefeltro (1422-82), the Duke of Urbino, owned a magnificent private study lined with inlaid wooden panels in which trompe-l'oeil bookcases filled with weaponry and musical instruments touted the worldly exploits of their patron. The panels themselves are at the Met, but facsimiles grace the walls of the Morgan in a vest-pocket exhibition focussed on the books they once surrounded. Also on hand in **"Federico da Montefeltro and His Library"** are Old Testament manuscripts in Hebrew, an illustrated Life of Job, and the collected works of Virgil, along with a coded letter that documents the Duke's participation in a papal plot against the Medici, long suspected but proved only in 2001, when the letter, written in 1478, was discovered in a private archive. Through Sept. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"Facing Fascism: New York and the Spanish Civil War."** Through Aug. 12. ♦ **"The *Jewish Daily Forward:* Embracing an Immigrant Community."** Through Sept. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Berlin Street Scene."** Through Sept. 17. (Open Thursdays, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"The World of Asher B. Durand: The Artist in Antebellum New York."** Through Sept. 30. ♦ **"New York Divided: Slavery and the Civil War."** Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (212-869-8089)—**"Making the Scene: The Midtown Y Photography Gallery, 1972-1996."** Through Sept. 16. (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30, Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 1 to 5.)

NOGUCHI MUSEUM
9-01 33rd Rd., at Vernon Blvd., Long Island City (718-204-7088)—**"Survey of Paris Abstractions."** Through Sept. 2. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK
32-01 Vernon Blvd., at Broadway, Long Island City (718-956-1819)—**"L.I.C., N.Y.C."** This show of works by artists with studios in the neighborhood never quite coheres. Kurt Lightner's paddock fence is incised—gratuitously, if appealingly—with what appears to be a letter from a nineteenth-century dirt farmer. The collaborative Flux Factory starts off promisingly with a beached boat, its windows revealing a mad scientist's scavenged specimens in jars. But, while the thing begs to be clambered on and inspected, it's a look-but-don't-touch affair. Amy Yoes's pavilion, painted in fast-food colors, does invite lounging, but it isn't much to look at. With works by Anne Deleporte, Mark di Suvero, and Joel Shapiro, among others. Through Aug. 5. (Open daily, 10 to sunset.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"David Adjaye: Making Public Buildings."** Through Oct. 28. **"Midnight's Daydream."** Works by participants in the museum's 2006-7 artists-in-residence program, featuring Titus Kaphar, Wardell Milan II, and Demetrius Oliver. Through Oct. 28. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: Many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

"HOT AND BOTHERED"
In case you miss the point that this photography exhibition, subtitled "Looking at the Landscape / Thinking About the World," is about global warming and other pressing environmental issues, Chuck Close's huge portrait of Al Gore looms benevolently near the entrance. Beyond, there is a thoughtful, substantial show, with work by Richard Misrach, Frederick Sommer, JoAnn Verburg, and Mark Klett, as well as a few photographers who address compromised landscape more directly. Among the latter: Emmet Gowin, with meticulously rendered

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aerial views of what appears to be an alien planet, and Boris Mikhailov, who finds his fellow-Russians bathing at the mouth of a factory's discharge pipe. Through Aug. 24. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.)

"POPCENTRIC"
The art in this show is the kind of amped-up kitsch that would make fantastic club décor (note John Armleder's live flowers planted in giant tires), but fails to achieve the trippy edge to which it apparently aspires. Christian Lemmerz's gold-leaf figurine of Osama bin Laden as Jesus and photographs of Leona Helmsley printed on gold foil by Dimitrios Antonitsis overdose on bling, while two variations of "Hairy Guy," a creature cast in bronze by Liz Craft, could be slacker relatives of Cousin It. Through Sept. 8. (Gering & López, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 646-336-7183.)

Short List

"DÉCOR: A CONQUEST BY MARCEL BROODTHAERS": Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 212-988-1623. Through Sept. 15. **"JEROME LIEBLING: THE GRACE OF BEING":** Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010. Through Aug. 17. **"TRUE FAITH":** Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-445-0444. Through Aug. 17.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

BANKS VIOLETTE
If you like dry ice, white light, and big, slick stage sets, then the two-part Banks Violette show—at Gladstone, in Chelsea, and Team, in SoHo—is for you. If not, you might find the young artist's installations de trop. Violette is known for collaborating with drone-metal musicians, and his layered fantasias suggest the aftermath of a rock show. At Team, a wrecked drum kit, cast in shiny black resin, accompanies delicate graphite drawings of a dead rose and a skull ring. At Gladstone, pearly white resin sound equipment is smashed and strewn, and fluorescent tubes dangle in disarray. Lest it all seem overheated, tanks of liquid nitrogen coat portions of the structures at both galleries with a frozen synthetic dew. Through Aug. 17. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300; Team, 83 Grand St. 212-279-9219.)

"THE EVOLUTION OF THE DIGITAL PORTRAIT"
Nancy Burson, who helped develop the software that made composite-photograph portraits possible in the late nineteen-seventies, inspired this exhibition of much more sophisticated recent examples of computer-enhanced photography. Burson's pieces, including Marilyn Monroe as a baby and an over-the-hill Barbie, have a certain iconic weight, but most of the photographers here take things into more unsettling and psychologically charged territory. That's where you'll find the work of Aziz & Cucher, Simon Johan, Loretta Lux, Jake Rowland, and EJ Major, the last of whom devolves from a pert preppy to a drug burnout over the course of twelve self-portraits. Through Aug. 17. (ClampArt, 521-531 W. 25th St. 646-230-0020.)

"THE LIZARD CULT"
The work in this group show is recent, but its origins date to the nineteen-seventies and East Texas State University, where the painting professor Lee Baxter Davis and the coterie of students he influenced became known as the Lizard Cult. The clique has persisted through the decades, and they really do paint (and draw) lizards—along with pterodactyls, flying humanoids, floating scaly eyeballs, and other mytho-cartoonish figures. Well-known names like Trenton Doyle Hancock, Gary Panter, and Christian Schumann are on the roster, along with Davis himself, whose ink-and-wash works suggest a hybrid of R. Crumb and William Blake. Through Aug. 10. (Clementine, 623 W. 27th St. 212-243-5937.)

"MARIO TESTINO: AT HOME"
Testino, the fashion photographer and celebrity portraitist, is also an art collector with a sharp eye. For this show, he's gathered contemporary work in several mediums by an array of new and established artists, including Elizabeth Peyton, Glenn Ligon, Wolfgang Tillmans, and Anselm Reyle. Installed salon-style in an imagined drawing room complete with fireplaces, the selection is eccentric but never arcane, and full of surprises, making it one of the more satisfying group shows in town. Bonus: a trio of small, mysterious photographs by Idris Khan, who reproduces unfamiliar Testino images one on top of the other until they blur into a gorgeous platinum haze, at once an accumulation and an erasure. Through Aug. 21. (Lambert, 550 W. 21st St. 212-242-3611.)

"A POINT IN SPACE IS A PLACE FOR AN ARGUMENT"
When a gallery takes up half a city block, as Zwirner does, the summer group show becomes a formidable proposition. Wittgenstein's "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus" provides the lofty title for this thirty-artist sculpture show about the ways in which objects differentiate themselves from infinite space. Some hunker down, like a skanky but fabulous John Chamberlain floor piece made by tying a cord around a sofa-size piece of foam. Others almost vanish, like Fred Sandback's elegant lines of yarn suspended in space. A punk-minimalist installation with blanket and tape recorder by Mike Kelley and Cathy Wilkes's post-feminist installation "We Are Pro-Choice," involving a mannequin on a toilet, also stand out in this wide-ranging, substantive show. Through Aug. 10. (525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.)

"ROLE EXCHANGE"
Sean Kelly is mounting more near-museum-quality shows, of which this photography exhibition is the latest. There's no breaking news here—identity and gender have been on the contemporary-art docket for years—but this show does a fine job of rounding up major players who have cross-dressed (Andy Warhol, Robert Mapplethorpe, Adrian Piper), gender-impersonated (Yasumasa Morimura, Lyle Ashton Harris, Gillian Wearing), and even self-multiplied (Anthony Goicolea). Scorekeepers may note that Marcel Duchamp is a no-show, but Cindy Sherman makes the grade. Through Aug. 3. (528 W. 29th St. 212-239-1181.)

Short List

"AGITATION AND REPOSE": Bonakdar, 521 W. 21st St. 212-414-4144. **"COLOUR BEFORE COLOR":** Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006. Through Aug. 17. **"LATE LIBERTIES":** Connelly, 625 W. 27th St. 212-337-9563.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

"IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST"
A couple of bellies are implied by the show's title. One is clearly cetacean—a sculpture of a whaler's harpoon piercing a wall (courtesy of the artist Valerie Hegarty) greets you at the door. Seafaring references recur in Lucky DeBellevue's pipe-cleaner sculptures, which look like psychedelic fishing nets, and in Adam Mendelsohn's rudimentary sculptural tableau, titled "Captain's Table." Then there's the belly of the art world, where young talent is swallowed up and spat back out, like Jonah by the whale. Standouts among the newbies include Anna Craycroft, whose drawings of famous orphans are both eerily cloying and cozily familiar, and Karsten Krejcarek, whose ghostly wall sculpture conjures interiors both psychological and bodily. Through Aug. 3. (Williams, 513 W. 4th St. 212-229-2757.)

Short List

"CO-ED DRIVE-IN": Borden, 560 Broadway. 212-431-0166. Through Aug. 3. **"NEW ECONOMY":** Artists Space, 38 Greene St. 212-744-7400. Through Aug. 31.

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
DOMESTIC IMPORT

Although JoAnn Verburg has been exhibiting since the seventies, "Present Tense," her impressive mid-career survey at MOMA, seems to have taken even blasé photography aficionados by surprise. True, Verburg has never made a big splash, and she doesn't attempt to create one here. Her work is quiet, thoughtful, and deliberate yet full of warmth; the bright summer sun that falls on so many of her subjects vies with the intense glow of her regard. The early work engages issues of portraiture, often in multi-panel pieces that incorporate time and movement. Verburg still treats her photographs as subtle time-release capsules, but since the early nineties they're less conceptual and more soulful. The best of them feature her charmingly rumpled husband, the poet Jim Moore, reading the newspaper. If the pictures are about finding one's place in the world, they're also steeped in the pleasures and terrors of domesticity. The show peaks with a wall of these reverberating images, as Verburg turns intimate moments into breaking news.

—Vince Aletti

Star Tribune
Terrorize

DANCE

PILOBOLUS

For its annual visit to the Joyce, the long-standing collaborative brings three repertory programs, each capped with a New York première. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. July 31-Aug. 1 and Aug. 6-7 at 7:30, Aug. 2-3 at 8, and Aug. 4 at 2 and 8. Through Aug. 11.)

LATINO CULTURAL FESTIVAL / DIQUIS TIQUIS

Alejandro Tosatti and Sandra Trejos, from Costa Rica, make up this modern-dance-theatre-mime duo, performing at the Latino Cultural Festival at Queens Theatre in the Park. Specializing in intimate, surreal vignettes, they derive their effect from Tosatti's fluidity and Trejos's expressive rag-doll presence. They will also perform at LaGuardia Community College. (Flushing Meadows Corona Park. 718-760-0064. Aug. 1 at 8:30; LaGuardia Performing Arts Center, 31-10 Thompson Ave., Long Island City. 718-482-5151. Aug. 2 at 7:30.)

Ventura stars as himself in Pedro Costa's drama "Colossal Youth," opening Aug. 3.

JASHAR AWAN

PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY

The venerable company returns to Lincoln Center's free "Out of Doors" series with two programs. On Friday, Taylor's new "Lines of Loss," grief-stricken and affecting, is balanced against the silly menagerie "Book of Beasts" and the joyful and timelessly fresh "Esplanade." On Saturday, the even sillier "Troilus and Cressida (Reduced)" offsets the baroque lightness of "Airs"; "Profiles" and "Piazzolla Caldera" round out the program. (Damrosch Park Bandshell. 212-546-2656. Aug. 3-4 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW

For Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève's U.S. début, Aug. 1-5 at the Ted Shawn, the Swiss ensemble will perform two pieces made for them by choreographers who are well established in Europe but seldom seen here—the Japanese Saburo Teshigawara (whose striking "Bones in Pages" was performed at last year's Lincoln Center Festival) and the young Belgian-Moroccan Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui (a former student of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker). Teshigawara's "Para-Dice" is a highly aesthetic, sinuous exploration of chance and celestial harmonies, while Cherkaoui's "Loin" (or "Far") is a more visceral, rough-hewn piece with lots of tumbling and turning on the floor, detailed hand movements, and a lighthearted section of unison storytelling. ♦ At the Doris Duke Theatre Aug. 2-5, the Reggie Wilson/Fist & Heel Performance Group presents "The Tale: Npinpee Nckutchie and the Tail of the Golden Dek." In a gentle pairing of dance and song, dancers and dancing singers groove through various African-based social dances, gospel hymns, stomped rhythms, and jazz recordings, never breaking a sweat. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. For a complete schedule, visit www.jacobspillow.org. Through Aug. 26.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS IN TOWN

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL

July 31-Aug. 1 at 8: It may be time for a rebranding at Lincoln Center's annual tribute to the boy genius of Salzburg. He plays second fiddle to two other composers (one, thankfully, modern), both of whom are represented on the opening program, with Louis Langrée conducting the Mostly Mozart Orchestra: Beethoven (the "Emperor" Concerto, with the pianist Paul Lewis) and Osvaldo Golijov (the cello concerto "Azul," with Alisa Weilerstein). The concerts begin with Mozart's buoyant "Linz" Symphony. ♦ July 31 at 10:30: In the first of the festival's "Little Night Music" evenings, Lewis and Weilerstein repair to the Kaplan Penthouse, set up cabaret-style, for a short but intense concert consisting of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 32 in C Minor and Kodály's Sonata for Solo Cello. ♦ Aug. 1-2 at 10:30 and Aug. 3 at 8: The magnificent St. Lawrence String Quartet surveys the late Beethoven quartets in three concerts; the first two are at the Kaplan Penthouse, the third at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Rose Theatre. ♦ Aug. 2 at 8: Paavo Järvi, the Cincinnati Symphony's dynamic young music director, leads the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen in an all-Beethoven program featuring the Seventh Symphony and the Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Major (with Ingrid Fliter, making her festival début). (Rose Theatre.) ♦ Aug. 4 at 4: Three more concerts this week feature Langrée and the Mostly Mozart Orchestra and the Swedish Radio Choir in music by Beethoven, all at Avery Fisher Hall; the first offers the "Pastoral" Symphony, the Fourth Piano Concerto (with Jeffrey Kahane), and the Gloria from the Mass in C Major. ♦ Aug. 4 at 7:30: All return to perform the Symphony No. 5, more excerpts from the C-Major Mass, and the "Choral Fantasy." ♦ Aug. 7 at 8: The indispensable Marc-André Hamelin will take the solo role in Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 17 in G Major; the rest of this lithe program is French, Ravel's "Pavan for a Dead Princess" and Fauré's Requiem (with the soprano Sophie Karthäuser and the baritone Dietrich Henschel). (212-721-6500. For details, see www.lincolncenter.org.)

NEW YORK GRAND OPERA: "TOSCA"

Puccini's truly grand opera, renowned for its extravagant settings, will receive an intimate (free) concert performance from the feisty company of Vincent La Selva, a master of Italian style, in Central Park's Naumburg Band Shell. (Mid-park, south of 72nd St. Aug. 1 at 7:30. No tickets required.)

BARGEMUSIC

Ad-hoc groups of fine young players form and reform at the newly revitalized floating chamber-music series. One of them, the Manhattan Chamber Symphonee, is in residence this weekend. Aug. 1 at 8: Vince Lee conducts intimate renditions of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 (with Maxim Pakhamov) and Tchaikovsky's "Rococo Variations" (with Andrew Tchekmazov). ♦ Aug. 2 at 8: A solo concert by the classical-jazz pianist Rob Schwimmer ("Beyond the Sky"). ♦ Aug. 4 at 8 and Aug. 5 at 4: The young orchestra returns with the violinist Mark Peskanov and the cellist Wendy Warner for a program of works by Vivaldi, Haydn (the Cello Concerto in C Major), Mozart, and Sarasate (the "Carmen Fantasy"). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

DIAMANDA GALÁS: "IMITATION OF LIFE"

Galás, a virtuoso pianist and avant-garde vocalist, is a performer of fearsome intensity. She comes to the Highline Ballroom to offer a set of jazz standards and French chansons made famous by the likes of Chet Baker and Marlene Dietrich. (431 W. 16th St. 212-414-5994. Aug. 6 and Aug. 12 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

BRIDGEHAMPTON CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Aug. 1 at 7:30: The week at the flutist Marya Martin's classy little Hamptons festival begins with several regulars (including the violinist Ani Kavafian and the cellist Fred Sherry) offering two beloved string sextets, Schoenberg's "Verklärte Nacht" and Brahms's Sextet No. 1 in B-Flat Major. (Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church.) ♦ Aug. 3 at 7: An edgier evening with the trio Real Quiet (featuring the pianist Andrew Russo), which performs recent works of the downtown school by Annie Gosfield and Phil Kline and the great masters Louis Andriessen and Frederic Rzewski. (Children's Museum of the East End, Bridgehampton, N.Y.) (631-537-6368. For full listing, see www.bcmf.org.)

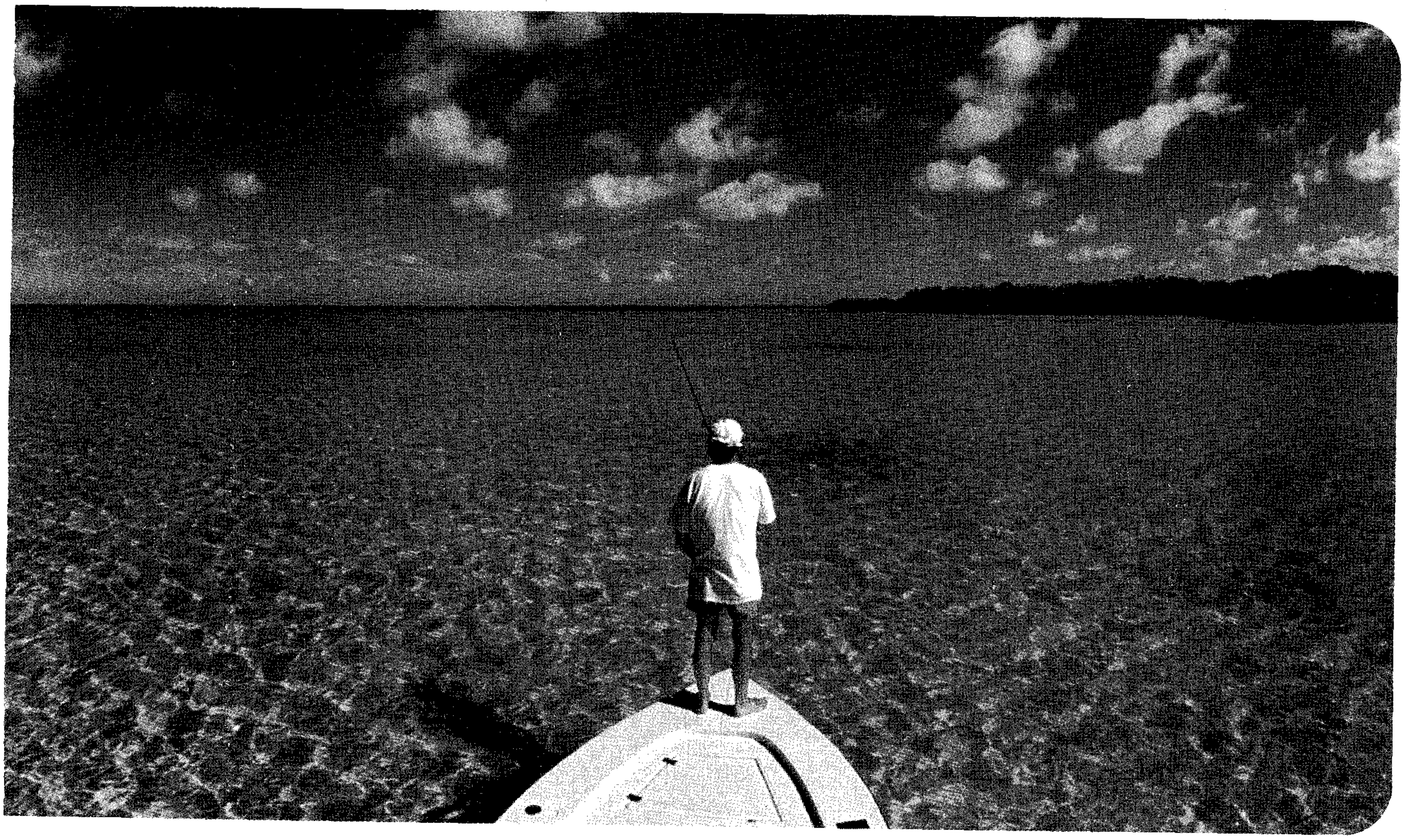
TANGLEWOOD

The final two concerts of Tanglewood's annual Festival of Contemporary Music, the most prestigious such event in the country, precede the festival's regular offerings. Aug. 1 at 8:30: Stefan Asbury and the conducting fellows of the Tanglewood Music Center lead its superb student orchestra in music by four masters of the American scene: Charles Wuorinen, John Corigliano ("Troubadours"), Joan Tower, and William Bolcom ("A Whitman Triptych"). ♦ Aug. 2 at 8:30: A jazz and avant-garde evening with the Julius Hemphill Sextet and Musica Elettronica Viva. ♦ Aug. 3 at 8:30: James Levine conducts the Boston Symphony Orchestra in a grab-bag concert that features not only works by Beethoven, Mozart (the Piano Concerto No. 18 in B-Flat Major, with Richard Goode), and Ravel (the Suite No. 2 from "Daphnis et Chloé," a Boston favorite) but also John Harbison's new Concerto for Bass Viol and Orchestra (with Edwin Barker). ♦ Aug. 4 at 8:30: Edo de Waart teams up with Yo-Yo Ma for an unashamedly populist concert of Dvořák—the Cello Concerto and the "New World" Symphony. ♦ Aug. 5 at 2:30: De Waart, a distinguished Dutchman, shepherds another talented musician from his country—the violinist Janine Jansen—through Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto on a program that begins with a world-première work by another countryman, Robin De-Raaff, and ends with Rachmaninoff's Third Symphony. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

BARD SUMMERSCAPE

In **"A Florentine Tragedy"** and **"The Dwarf,"** the fin-de-siècle Viennese composer Alexander Zemlinsky

And suddenly, all those trips down the grocery aisle seem truly fulfilling.



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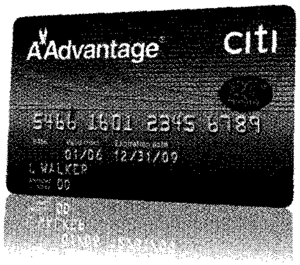

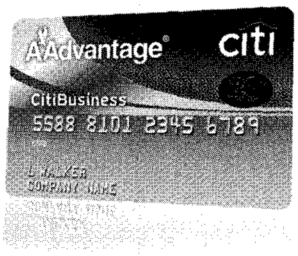

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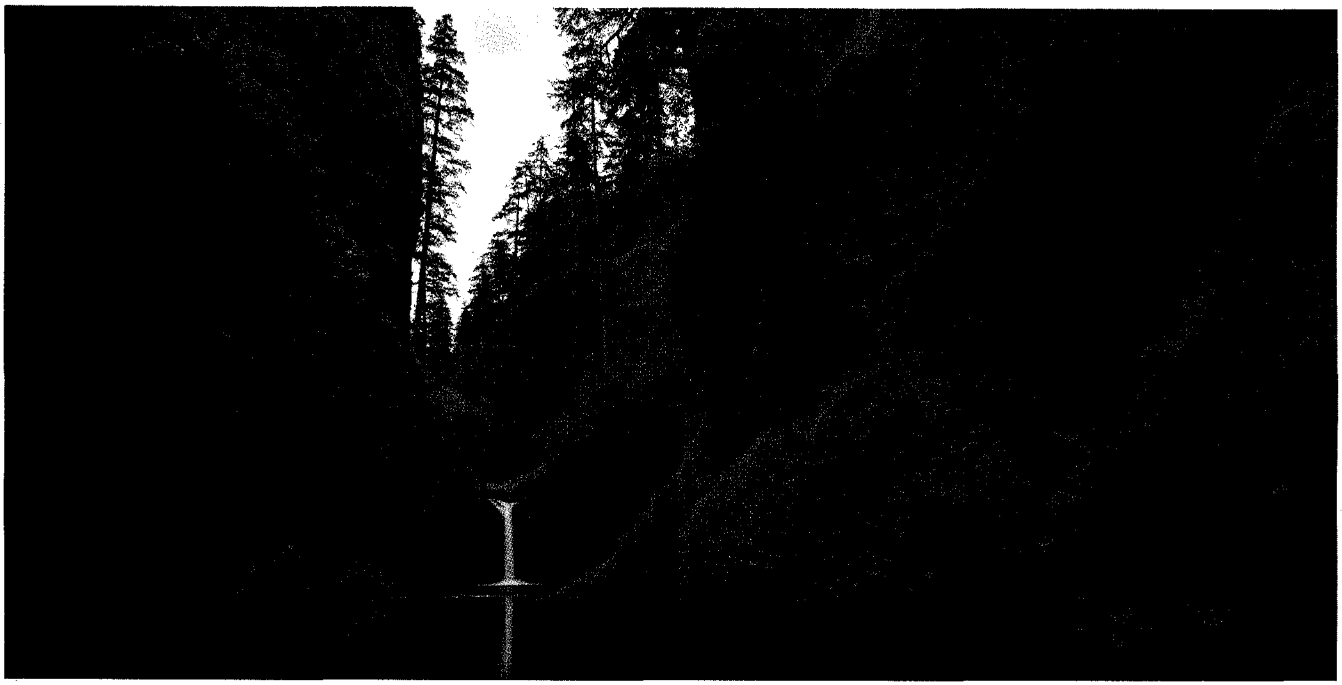
transformed two prose works by Oscar Wilde into full-blooded one-act operas. Leon Botstein conducts both as a double bill, with fanciful sets and costumes by the faux-Romantic duo of McDermott & McGough. (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900. Aug. 2 and Aug. 4 at 8 and Aug. 5 at 3.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA

Four staged operas—and an oratorio—on the subject of Orpheus and Eurydice. Aug. 2 at 8 and Aug. 7 at 2: The production of Offenbach's **"Orpheus in the Underworld"** gets nearly everything right. Part "Brideshead Revisited" and part Feydeau farce, with an unholy bit of "Cabaret" (think leather) thrown in, it's vivid, daring, funny, and musically sound. One can savor performances from the sterling veterans Joyce Castle and Jake Gardner and the impressive newcomers Marc Heller and Joélle Harvey; Jean-Marie Zeitouni leads an accompaniment with plenty of élan. ♦ Aug. 3 at 8 and Aug. 6 at 2: Gluck's **"Orphée et Eurydice,"** presented in the Romantic-era adaptation by Berlioz and featuring Michael Maniaci and Amanda Pabyan (a glorious Eurydice); Julian Wachner conducts. ♦ Aug. 4 at 8: Philip Glass's **"Orphée,"** the first of his operas ever to be presented by the company, is based on the film by Jean Cocteau. Three estimable singers—Philip Cutlip, Lisa Saffer, and Caroline Worra—take the leading roles; Anne Manson. ♦ Aug. 5 at 11 A.M.: The company offers the first of two concert performances of Haydn's **"L'Anima de Filosofo,"** a lovely, if undramatic, treatment of the immortal legend, which works best when performed as an oratorio. The singers include Sarah Coburn and Norman Shankle; Manson and Antony Walker split the podium duties. ♦ Aug. 5 at 3: The last opera to join the schedule is the first great opera of the Western tradition, Monteverdi's **"Orfeo."** The dulcet young tenor Michael Slattery, who has sung the title role at Paris's Théâtre du Chatelet, repeats it here, with Megan Monahan as Euridice; Walker. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)



John Pfahl's photograph "Punch Bowl Falls, Eagle Creek, Oregon," from the exhibition "Co-Ed Drive-In," at Borden.

ASTON MAGNA FESTIVAL

The long-running series, featuring some of the Northeast's finest early-music performers, closes its season with "The Passion of Purcell," a concert featuring a performance of the composer's sole opera, **"Dido and Aeneas."** Deborah Rentz-Moore is Dido; Daniel Stepner conducts. (Olin Hall, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7425. Aug. 3 at 8. ♦ Simon's Rock College, Great Barrington, Mass. 800-875-7156. Aug. 4 at 5.)

CARAMOOR

Aug. 3 at 8: Mitsuko Uchida, usually found at Marlboro during the summer months, comes south to complete Caramoor's classical season with two solo recitals centering on Beethoven. The first features the Sonatas Nos. 28 and 29 ("Hammerklavier"), along with what should be an exquisite rendition of Schoenberg's Three Piano Pieces, Op. 11. ♦ Aug. 4 at 3: The Caramoor Jazz Festival concludes with a marathon concert that features a stunning group of performers: the Arturo O'Farrill Trio, the pianist Fred Hersch, the Odean Pope Saxophone Choir, the Brad Mehldau Trio, and the Joe Lovano/Paquito D'Rivera Festival Ensemble. ♦ Aug. 5 at 4:30: Uchida brings down the curtain with Beethoven's Sonatas Nos. 30, 31, and 32 (in C Minor, Op. 111). (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Yale Summer School of Music's Stoeckel Estate is a civilized, well-groomed place, and this week's concerts are especially refined. Aug. 3 at 8: The flutist Patti Monson, the oboist Humbert Lucarelli, and the pianist André-Michel Schub, among other musicians, offer works by Mozart and Brahms (the Piano Quartet in C Minor). ♦ Aug. 4 at 8: Les Idées Heureuses, a Baroque dance-and-music troupe, visits Norfolk to present works by Lully, Couperin, and Rameau. (Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000.)

MARLBORO MUSIC FESTIVAL

Each weekend at this renowned festival brings concerts of chamber music by some of the world's most distinguished musicians (including the pianists Richard Goode and Mitsuko Uchida) and their phenomenally talented protégés. (Marlboro, Vt. 802-254-2394. Aug. 3-4 at 8:30 and Aug. 5 at 2:30. Programs are announced one week in advance at www.marlboromusic.org.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS

Aug. 4 at 6: Few groups at the Maverick have as devoted a following as do the gentlemen of the Tokyo String Quartet, who continue the series' Beethoven bent with renditions of the Quartet in F Major, Op. 18, and the "Serioso" and "Harp" Quartets. ♦ Aug. 5 at 3: The vibrant St. Lawrence String Quartet offers the magisterial Quartet in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 131, and the valedictory Quartet in F Major, Op. 135. (Woodstock, N.Y. For more information, call 845-679-8217.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN

The music of Dvořák anchors two concerts by the pianist Pamela Mia Paul and the Zemlinsky String Quartet of Prague. Aug. 4 at 6:30: The Piano Quartet in E-Flat Major concludes a concert that also features string quartets by Mozart (in E-Flat Major, K. 428) and Mendelssohn. ♦ Aug. 5 at 3: Haydn's "Rider" Quartet and Beethoven's Quartet in E-Flat Major, Op. 127, are a prelude for the rollicking Piano Quintet in A Major. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

MOVIES OPENING

BECOMING JANE

Anne Hathaway stars in this drama, about the young Jane Austen's love life. Directed by Julian Jarrold; co-starring James McAvoy. Opening Aug. 1. (In wide release.)

BLAME IT ON FIDEL

A comedy about a bourgeois Parisian girl in the early nineteen-seventies whose parents become radicals. Directed by Julie Gavras. In French. Opening Aug. 3. (Cinema Village.)

THE BOURNE ULTIMATUM

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening August 3. (In wide release.)

BRATZ

A live-action comedy, inspired by the dolls, about overcoming cliquishness in high school, directed by Sean McNamara. Opening Aug. 3. (In wide release.)

EL CANTANTE

A bio-pic about the late salsa singer Hector Lavoe, starring Marc Anthony and Jennifer Lopez, directed by Leon Ichaso. Opening Aug. 3. (In wide release.)

COLOSSAL YOUTH

Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Aug. 3. (Anthology Film Archives.)

HOT ROD

Andy Samberg stars as a motorcycle stuntman who plans to jump a line of buses to finance his stepfather's heart surgery, in a comedy directed by Akiva Schaffer. Opening Aug. 3. (In wide release.)

IF I DIDN'T CARE

A thriller, set in the Hamptons, about a wealthy man who wants to kill his wife. Directed by the brothers Benjamin and Orson Cummings; starring Bill Sage and Roy Scheider. Opening Aug. 3. (Village East Cinemas.)

SUMMER '04

In this drama, directed by Stefan Krohmer, a middle-aged woman and a teen-age girl compete for a man. In German. Opening Aug. 1. (Film Forum.)

UNDERDOG

A live-action comedy about the super-powered beagle, with the voice of Jason Lee. Co-starring Peter Dinklage and James Belushi; directed by Frederik Du Chau. Opening Aug. 3. (In wide release.)

THE WILLOW TREE

A drama, directed by Majid Majidi, about a blind Iranian man whose vision is restored in a French hospital. In Farsi. Opening Aug. 3. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

NOW PLAYING

BILLY LIAR

Touching, funny, and irritating, John Schlesinger's 1963 film is a portrait of a would-be artist as a weak young man. Tom Courtenay plays Billy, an undertaker's clerk in a city in northern England. Billy talks about becoming a novelist or a scriptwriter, but mostly he devotes himself to juggling two fiancées, lying about his family, and dreaming of an imaginary country named Ambrosia. Courtenay conveys Billy's petty rebelliousness but fails to suggest any quality that would attract the many women in his life. Nonetheless, Schlesinger comes up with a classic snapshot of England as a country in need of youthful renewal, and he has just the actress to embody it in Julie Christie. As Billy's third gal, she's a free spirit who hopes, in vain, to take him to London. With a forceful stride and a relaxed emotional power in her face, she moves through the streets, swinging her handbag like a wrecking ball.—*Michael Sragow* (MOMA; Aug. 4 and Aug. 6.)

COLOSSAL YOUTH

Pedro Costa's demanding but rewarding drama, set in Lisbon's dilapidated Cape Verdean ghetto as it undergoes urban renewal, lends epic grandeur to a scruffy milieu. Costa spent fifteen months there, working with the residents to develop their own texts and to play themselves. Ventura, a retired immigrant laborer, circulates among his children—including a recovering drug addict, a beggar, a museum guard, and a mystical idler who is the last holdout in the crumbling slum—as he negotiates with the authorities over his impending move to a modern, antiseptic new apartment. The memory, pain, and longing that fill their static, drama-free lives emerge in their fervent monologues; their declamatory, quasi-operatic performance style raises their anecdotes to the level of legend. Costa's devotion to the spiritual loam of the long-enduring has a Faulknerian charm, as does his tracing of broad tectonic historical movements in the minutiae of ordinary lives and his overarching view of the transition from agrarian to urban, from magical to rational, from subsistence to a toehold on affluence. In Portuguese.—*Richard Brody* (Anthology Film Archives.)

THE CROWD

King Vidor's allegorical romance, from 1928, follows an ordinary American, John Sims, from his small-town birth, on July 4, 1900, to his arrival in New York as a young man. Determined to "be somebody," he instead becomes a faceless cog in a colossal machine and puts his ambitions aside to marry and start a family. John's choice is explained by the agonized tenderness of the love scenes (featuring the willowy Eleanor Boardman as Mary Sims) with which Vidor balances his monumental realism—famously, the shot, through a skyscraper window, of a seemingly endless grid of desks where Sims scribbles endless columns of numbers. Yet he can't give up his wild dreams of greatness, and tragedy results. The struggling couple's grim apartment, which is filled with the entry-level gadgetry that is their main source of comfort and conflict, unites the public and private realms. So does the new world of media—advertising, radio, records, and huge theatrical pleasure palaces—that represent the crowd to itself. Vidor, playing to that crowd, sternly warns against going it alone. Silent.—*R.B.* (Film Forum; Aug. 6.)

HAIRSPRAY

The movie version of the hit musical (based in turn on John Waters's 1988 film) is perfectly pleasant but not as exhilarating as the show, which distilled our nostalgia for the candied period between Elvis's early work and the arrival of the Beatles. The director of the movie, Adam Shankman, and the screenwriter, Leslie Dixon, have removed the traces of camp humor and Broadway blue that gave the stage show its happily knowing flavor. As before, Tracy Turnblad (Nikki Blonsky), a chubby Baltimore teen-ager in 1962, lives to dance and to make out with the sweet, good-looking school king (Zac Efron), and much of the movie feels like a prolonged platter party. The dance numbers, however, are unimaginatively shot, and the idea of substituting John Travolta for Harvey Fierstein as Tracy's hefty mother, Edna (played by the outrageous Divine in Waters's original version), is a blandly earnest betrayal—Travolta gives a sincere, unfunny performance as a Baltimore housewife. With Michelle Pfeiffer in an amusing turn as the hypocritical shrew who manages a local TV station, and Christopher Walken, gruff and tender, as Tracy's father.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 7/23/07.) (In wide release.)

HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX

The fifth and longest of J. K. Rowling's fantasy books gets the shortest running time, in the director David Yates's economical take on the boy wizard. By focussing the story on Harry (a leaner and slightly meaner Daniel Radcliffe) and his exploits, Yates dispenses with many of the novel's subplots and is able to push the story forward, ominously foreshadowing the dark times to come. The cleanly delivered story line has the evil Lord Voldemort (Ralph Fiennes) gathering his henchmen to let loose his powers, while Harry tries to convince those around him that Voldemort is on the march. There are three great treats in this installment of the Potter franchise: Harry's first kiss; the ethereal Luna Lovegood (Evanna Lynch, who won the part in a contest and is extraordinarily good); and the horrid new Professor of the Dark Arts, Dolores Umbridge, played by Imelda Staunton, whose scene-stealing, fascinatingly nasty performance is among the best in the series.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU CHUCK AND LARRY

This ribald but sentimental comedy, about a pair of rough-hewn Brooklyn firefighters, is "Brokeback Mountain" for the "Jackass" demographic. Bureaucratic fine print requires Larry Valentine (Kevin James), the widowed father of two young children, to find a new insurance beneficiary through marriage, and the only person he trusts is his colleague and best friend, Chuck Levine (Adam Sandler), a notorious ladies' man. The two men assume that privacy rules will keep their civil union quiet, but when its legitimacy is challenged they're forced to make it public and, through a series of mishaps, they become tabloid fodder. Though the movie trades on every gay stereotype in the book, it also pointedly lampoons them: the couple, who adapt to their newfound identity with a self-interested enthusiasm, soon inspire closeted gay men to come out. The result is a heartfelt yet painfully sincere liberal social-problem film that offers a ringing endorsement of gay marriage but, playing to its target audience, avoids any hint of gay sex. Sandler, however, plays Chuck with an imposing comic vigor: in a tuxedo, with his hair slicked back and his Brooklyn accent thickened, he resembles a young Tony Curtis.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

MOLIÈRE

A bio-pic about the playwright, the details of whose life are surprisingly sparse; whole years are unaccounted for in the historical record, which gives the director, Laurent Tirard, considerable license in laying out a series of imaginary escapades. Molière (Romain Duris), the leading light of a failing theatrical troupe, is hired on a whim by a rich fool (Fabrice Luchini), who needs help composing an aphrodisiac play. The fool has a wife (Laura Morante), with whom the playwright—disguised as a priest—falls in love. And so the complications abound, the idea being that Molière was inspired by actual shenanigans to compose his great farces of later years. Sadly, the film itself is not funny, being far too stolid for either raucousness or grace, while the thuggish Duris, ideal for gloomier fare, is wholly miscast as a wellspring of human comedy. Only Morante and the nimble Luchini leaven the mood. In French.—*Anthony Lane* (7/30/07) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

NO END IN SIGHT

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Film Forum.)

RATATOUILLE

For Remy (Patton Oswalt), the restless rodent who is the leading figure in Pixar's brilliant new animation feature, the omnivore's dilemma can be solved only by eating well. Rejecting the usual rat's feast of garbage, Remy realizes that he needs to cook. Though "Ratatouille" starts out as a minor conceit about a rat who turns himself into a connoisseur, it becomes a gripping comic fable about the implacability of an artist. Washed into a sewer, Remy lands in Paris, where he makes himself known to a young man, Alfredo Linguini (Lou Romano), who has inherited a famous restaurant but cannot crack an egg. Quietly, he rides under Alfredo's toque and pulls tufts of his hair, controlling the young man's chopping and sauce-stirring techniques like a master puppeteer. Brad Bird's animation crew is good at so many things (for instance, the geography of the restaurant kitchen where much of the movie takes place) that one is released into the pleasures of the story and the details of culinary lore. With Peter O'Toole providing the voice of the feared food critic, Anton Ego.—*D.D.* (7/23/07) (In wide release.)

RESCUE DAWN

Ten years ago, Werner Herzog made an extraordinary documentary called "Little Dieter Needs to Fly." This recounted the exploits of Dieter Dengler, a German-born pilot in the U.S. Navy, who was shot down on a secret mission over Laos in 1966, imprisoned in the jungle for many months, and finally, after an audacious breakout, picked up and brought back to safety. Now Herzog retells the tale as a feature film, starring Christian Bale—first chipper, then cadaverous—as the indestructible Dengler. Many of the highs and lows remain intact, including the hero's immersion in a well, the wooden stocks that were used to restrain him at night, and the eventual triumph of his return to the aircraft carrier from which he had set out. Yet the film lacks the hypnotic strangeness of the original, and the dramatized Dengler, however heroic his survival, feels like a watery imitation of the real thing. With Steve Zahn as Duane, a fellow-inmate of Dengler's; the highlight of the movie consists of the two starving men reciting fridgefuls of imaginary food.—*A.L.* (7/9 & 16/07) (In wide release.)

SICKO

In the beginning of Michael Moore's attack on America's health-care system, he records heartbreaking interviews with families who have been betrayed or neglected by H.M.O.s and insurance companies. But then Moore hauls off three ailing Ground Zero rescue workers and other seriously ill people to Guantánamo Bay, where the detainees allegedly get good (and free) health care. The sick Americans are turned away, of course, and the joke seems insensitive. Moore does find some help for the rescue workers in Havana (the other sick Americans mysteriously vanish), and the rest of the movie is devoted to the wonders of health care in Canada, England, and France as well as in Cuba. But Moore accepts what doctors and patients abroad say at face value—as a report on national health services in different countries, the movie is worthless—and he doesn't interview a single American who might have ideas about reforming our own system. Since the majority of Americans want some form of national health care, Moore, for once, seems behind the curve.—*D.D.* (7/2/07) (In wide release.)

THE SIMPSONS MOVIE

The incomparable gang at full length for the first time, with enough jokes, satire, nonsense, and sentiment to justify the eighty-eight minutes. Homer falls in love with a pig, interrupting the sadomasochistic bond between him and Bart, and pollutes Lake Springfield with pig doody (the family's home state, in case you were wondering, borders on Maine and Kentucky). As a result, President Schwarzenegger quarantines the town, prompting the locals to drive the Simpsons to Alaska, where Homer has mystical visions with the help of a befurred Inuit woman. Written by the show's creators, Matt Groening and James L. Brooks, among many others. Directed by David Silverman.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

SUNSHINE

The British director Danny Boyle has energy to burn, but the effects are most ardent and spectacular when

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he stays close to home—witness "Trainspotting" and "28 Days Later," set in Scotland and London, respectively. When he drifts away, as in "The Beach" and "A Life Less Ordinary," much of that verve declines. Now he has left Earth altogether, with mixed results. A crew of astronauts is sent to administer a nuclear kick-start to our dying sun. The mission, like the film, falters as they veer from their appointed course to dock with a sister ship: a lunatic risk, as anybody could have told them, leading to fire, murder, suicide, bodily evaporation, and other unhealthy results. Logic is lost in space, the clarity of the buildup is squandered, and the climax of the film, however ravishing, becomes a blur of mystical confusion. With Cillian Murphy as a blue-eyed physicist and Michelle Yeoh as an interplanetary gardener.—*A.L.* (7/30/07) (In wide release.)

THIS IS ENGLAND
Shane Meadows wrote and directed this semi-autobiographical drama, set in a British coastal town in the early eighties, about a sweet twelve-year-old, Sean (the uncanny Thomas Turgoose), whose father died fighting for England in the Falklands. Sean seeks protection from school bullies among a clique of older kids dallying with skinhead fashion, but it's not until he meets Combo (Stephen Graham), an ex-con with extreme-rightist skinhead beliefs, that he finds true kinship. Meadows presents a startlingly odd mix of near-treacly sentimentality and looming menace of extreme violence. Unfortunately, his explanation of skinhead hatred as mere insanity feels like a cop-out, and protracted stock-footage sequences strain to connect a wider view of British unrest to the intimate story. But there are wonderful ensemble scenes and stunning performances all around, including that of Jo Hartley, as Sean's earthy, tuned-in mom; Graham, as the explosive skinhead; and, especially, Turgoose, as the punky but tender tough guy in the making.—*Shauna Lyon* (IFC Center.)

TRANSFORMERS
Yet another quiet family drama from the director Michael Bay, bringer of "Armageddon." This one stars Shia LaBeouf as the teen-age Sam, who takes possession of his first car, unaware that it is in fact an outsized yellow robot, one of the saintly Autobots sent to deliver him from evil. The evil in question is represented by the Decepticons, who are hellbent on destroying Planet Earth for want of anything better to do. Mankind (played largely by Special Forces units of the U.S. military) is caught in the crossfire between the warring machines, many of whom, though computer-generated, give more balanced performances than their human counterparts. The entire farrago makes just enough sense to be grasped by a nine-year-old boy, but no more; any logical rifts are bridged by flying wreckage and a soundtrack apparently scored for brass, wind, and jackhammers. With Jon Voight as a barely transformed Donald Rumsfeld.—*A.L.* (7/9 & 16/07) (In wide release.)

WHERE DOES YOUR HIDDEN SMILE LIE?
Filming Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet at work in the editing room on their 1996 "Sicilia!," Pedro Costa offers an amazingly revealing study of the moviemaking process, an artistic manifesto on the wing, and a touching glimpse of an exceptional love story. The couple, who lived and worked together from the nineteen-fifties until Huillet's death, last year, divided the labor clearly, with Huillet doing the editing while Straub paces around and perorates brilliantly until she either refutes him or shuts him up with brusque adoration. Costa's patient, oblique framing gives Straub a stage on which to declaim his conjoined ideals of "theatrical abstraction" and political revolution, yet also keeps close watch on the practicalities of editorial decision-making, about which the pair are uniquely articulate. Glimpses of Straub lecturing a handful of students in a near-empty screening room suggest the loneliness of the filmmakers' prophetic journey. In French and Italian.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives; Aug. 4-5.)

Also Playing

THE DEVIL CAME ON HORSEBACK: IFC Center. **I KNOW WHO KILLED ME:** In wide release. **NO RESERVATIONS:** In wide release. **WHO'S YOUR CADDY:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—The films of Norman Mailer. Aug. 1 at 7: "Cremaster 2" (1999, Matthew Barney). ♦ Aug. 1 at 9: "When We Were Kings" (1996, Leon Gast). ♦ Aug. 2 at 7: "Tough Guys Don't Dance" (1987). ♦ Aug. 2 at 9:15: "Town Bloody Hall" (1979, Chris Hegedus and D. A. Pennebaker). ♦ The films of Pedro Costa. Aug. 3 and Aug. 7 at 7 and Aug. 5 at 9:30: "The Blood" (1989; in Portuguese). ♦ Aug. 3 at 9:15 and Aug. 5 at 5: "Down to Earth" (1994; in Portuguese). ♦ Aug. 4 at 2:30, Aug. 6 at 6:30, and Aug. 7 at 9:15: "Bones" (1997; in Portuguese). ♦ Aug. 4 at 5 and Aug. 6 at 8:30: "In Vanda's Room" (2000; in Portuguese). ♦ Aug. 4 at 8:30 and Aug. 5 at 7:15: "Where Does Your Hidden Smile Lie?" (†).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Paul Giamatti Selects." Aug. 1 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Frenzy" (1972, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ Aug. 2 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Dr. Strangelove" (1964, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ Aug. 7 at 6 and 9: "Dawn of the Dead" (1978, George A. Romero). ♦ Films from the New Crowned Hope Festival. Aug. 3 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Syndromes and a Century" (2006, Apichatpong Weerasethakul; in Thai). ♦ Aug. 4 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Opera Jawa" (2006, Garin Nugroho; in Indonesian). ♦ Aug. 5 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "I Don't Want to Sleep Alone" (2006, Tsai Ming-Liang; in Taiwanese, Malay, Mandarin, and Bengali). ♦ Aug. 6 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Half Moon" (2006, Bahman Ghobadi; in Kurdish and Farsi).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through Aug. 27: "NYC Noir." August 1 at 1, 4:30, and 8 and Aug. 2 at 1 and 4:30: "Kiss of Death" (1947, Henry Hathaway). ♦ Aug. 1 at 2:55, 6:25, and 9:55 and Aug. 2 at 2:55: "Pickup on South Street" (1953, Samuel Fuller). ♦ Aug. 2 at 6:30 and 10: "The Seventh Victim" (1943, Mark Robson). ♦ Aug. 2 at 8: "A Double Life" (1947, George Cukor). ♦ Aug. 3-4 at 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50: "The Taking of Pelham One Two Three" (1974, Joseph Sargent). ♦ Aug. 5 at 1, 4:45, and 8:30 and Aug. 6 at 4:10: "The Big Clock" (1948, John Farrow). ♦ Aug. 5 at 2:50, 6:35, and 10:20 and Aug. 6 at 2:10 and 6: "The Lost Weekend" (1945, Billy Wilder). ♦ Aug. 6 at 8:10: "The Crowd" (†).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"*Filmmaker* Magazine Presents." Aug. 1 at 7:30: "65 Revisited" (2007, D. A. Pennebaker), introduced by the director. ♦ In revival. Aug. 3-5 at noon: "Harakiri" (1962, Masaki Kobayashi; in Japanese). ♦ Aug. 3-5 at noon: "Woman in the Dunes" (1964, Hiroshi Teshigahara; in Japanese). ♦ "Waverly Midnights: Remembering James Lyons." Aug. 3-4: "Velvet Goldmine" (1998, Todd Haynes).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Rialto Pictures: Reviving Classic Cinema." Except where noted, all films are in French. Aug. 2 at 6:15: "Bob le Flambeur" (1955, Jean-Pierre Melville). ♦ Aug. 2 at 8:30: "Mafioso" (1962, Alberto Lattuada; in Italian). ♦ Aug. 3 at 6:15: "Mouchette" (1967, Robert Bresson). ♦ Aug. 3 at 8:15: "Au Hasard Balthazar" (1966, Bresson). ♦ Aug. 4 at 2 and Aug. 6 at 8:30: "Godzilla" (1954, Ishiro Honda; in Japanese). ♦ Aug. 4 at 4 and Aug. 6 at 6:15: "Billy Liar" (†). ♦ Aug. 5 at 2: "Murderous Maids" (2000, Jean-Pierre Denis). ♦ Aug. 5 at 4: "Classe Tous Risques" (1960, Claude Sautet).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Sept. 2: "Uneasy Riders: American Film in the Nixon Years, 1970-1974." Aug. 4 at 2: "Little Murders" (1971, Alan Arkin). ♦ Aug. 4 at 4:30: "Loving" (1970, Irvin Kerschner). ♦ Aug. 5 at 3:30: "Husbands" (1970, John Cassavetes). ♦ Aug. 5 at 6:30: "Play It as It Lays" (1972, Frank Perry).

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." Aug. 3 at 9:30: "The Red Shoes" (1948, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger), introduced by the film editor Thelma Schoonmaker, Powell's widow.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Aug. 3-4: "Fantastic Planet" (1973, René Laloux; in French).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Garbo & Dietrich: Screen Goddesses." Aug. 4-5 at 6: "Morocco" (1930, Josef von Sternberg). Aug. 4-5 at 7:45: "A Woman of Affairs" (1928, Clarence Brown).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Films by Roman Polanski. Aug. 1 at 6:15: "Repulsion" (1965). ♦ Aug. 1 at 8:30: "The Fearless Vampire Killers" (1967). ♦ Preview screening. Aug. 2 at 6:15: "The 11th Hour" (2007, Leila Conners Petersen and Nadia Conners), followed by a discussion with several of the film's participants. ♦ "*Film Comment* Selects." Aug. 2 at 8:15: "Them" (2006, David Moreau and Xavier Palud; in French). ♦ Aug. 5 at 7: "The Executioner's Song" (1982, Lawrence Schiller), followed by a discussion with the editor of *Film Comment*, Gavin Smith, and the director. ♦ Through Aug. 19: The films of Gérard Depardieu. All films below are in French. Aug. 3 at 6:30: "Going Places" (1974, Bertrand Blier). ♦ Aug. 3 at 9: "Barocco" (1976, André Téchiné). ♦ Aug. 4 at 2: "Get Out Your Handkerchiefs" (1978, Blier). ♦ Aug. 4 at 4:15 and Aug. 6 at 8:30: "Le Camion (The Truck)" (1977, Marguerite Duras). ♦ Aug. 4 at 6: "Danton" (1983, Andrzej Wajda). ♦ Aug. 4 at 8:45 and Aug. 6 at 6:15: "Maîtresse" (1976, Barbet Schroeder).

READINGS AND TALKS

MCNALLY ROBINSON BOOKSELLERS
The "Author / Editor" series here brings together writers and their editors for a behind-the-scenes look at the creative process. On Aug. 1 at 7, Dalia Sofer, the author of the novel "The Septembers of Shiraz," talks with her editor at HarperCollins, Lee Boudreaux. (52 Prince St. No tickets necessary.)

"SECRET SCIENCE CLUB"
The biogeochemist William Schlesinger discusses global warming. (Union Hall, 702 Union St., Park Slope, Brooklyn. Aug. 1 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Amiri Baraka offers selections from his latest collection of short fiction, "Tales of the Out & the Gone." With the poet Sonia Sanchez. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777. Aug. 2 at 7:30.)

PARAGRAPH
The downtown writers' workspace presents an off-site reading by the novelists Helen Schulman and Jeffrey Frank, who is also an editor at this magazine. (Clay, 25 W. 14th St. For more information, visit www.paragraphny.com. Aug. 3 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

COLE BROS. CIRCUS OF THE STARS
The Cole Bros. Circus, which has been around in one form or another since the late nineteenth century, has set up its big top in Coney Island, replete with acrobats, elephants, daredevils, and clowns. (Stillwell Ave. at Bowery St. Through Aug. 5. For more information, call 888-332-5200, or visit www.gotothecircus.com.)

NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON
On a summer afternoon in Times Square, it can feel as though every tourist in the world is passing through New York City. Migrating shorebirds also tend to visit in August, but they stay away from the concrete canyons of Manhattan, preferring the wide-open spaces of the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, in Queens. On Aug. 4, starting at 10 A.M., New York City Audubon is sponsoring a walking tour of the nine-thousand-acre refuge, followed by a trip to the relatively untouched beaches and dunes of neighboring Fort Tilden, on the Atlantic Ocean. Expect to see black skimmers, glossy ibis, great egrets, and the American oystercatcher, which, according to Erin Woodard, the program manager of N.Y.C. Audubon's Natural Areas Initiative, "looks like it's straight out of Dr. Seuss." (For more information, call 212-691-7483, or visit www.nyc-audubon.org.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
As the city bakes in midsummer heat and dampness, **Swann's** sale of vintage posters (Aug. 1) offers us images of cool relief: soothing breezes ("Hawaii Calls"), handsome men in cowboy hats and swimming trunks ("Death Valley, the Famous Winter Resort"), and pastel fishing boats on turquoise seas (an ad for tourism in Greece). Amid the sun and fun are more ominous images, such as L. N. Britton's First World War poster "Warning!," an illustration of the catastrophic results of shoddy airplane construction. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

"Kustom Kills and Hot Rod Thrills," in Williamsburg.

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
SAD AND BEAUTIFUL
Aug. 15-19

The director Vincente Minnelli is best known for his musicals, but his musicals are best known for their emotional subtlety, so it comes as no surprise that his melodramas are equally stellar. Anthology Film Archives shows some of the finest of these, including "The Bad and the Beautiful," from 1952, and "Two Weeks in Another Town," from 1962, two of the most revealing inside-Hollywood dramas ever. (212-505-5181.)

THE THEATRE
SAINTED EXISTENCE
Aug. 24

The Playwrights Horizons season begins with a new play by Kate Fodor, "100 Saints You Should Know." The drama, in which the lives of a cleaning woman, her teen-age daughter, a priest, and his mother intersect, stars Janel Moloney, Zoe Kazan, Jeremy Shamos, and Lois Smith. (212-279-4200.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
DADDY-O!
Aug. 25

The Rumblers Car Club's seventh annual "Kustom Kills and Hot Rod Thrills" show brings some three hundred pre-1964 lead sleds, beaters, and other cars to a parking lot beneath the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. (www.rumblersnyc.com.)

ART
ISLAND TIME
Aug. 31

For some, the word "Caribbean" is synonymous with "getaway"; for others, it evokes colonialism. These are among the themes explored by forty-five artists with ties to fourteen countries in "Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art," opening at the Brooklyn Museum. (718-638-5000.)

NIGHT LIFE
BROOKLYN BOUND
Sept. 4

Bowery Presents, the local concert-promotion company behind the Bowery Ballroom and the Mercury Lounge, has renovated the old Northsix space in Brooklyn and renamed it the Music Hall of Williamsburg. It opens on September 4 with Patti Smith and her band. (www.musichallofwilliamsburg.com.)

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
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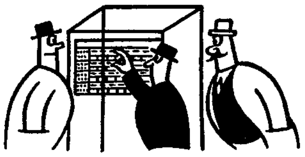
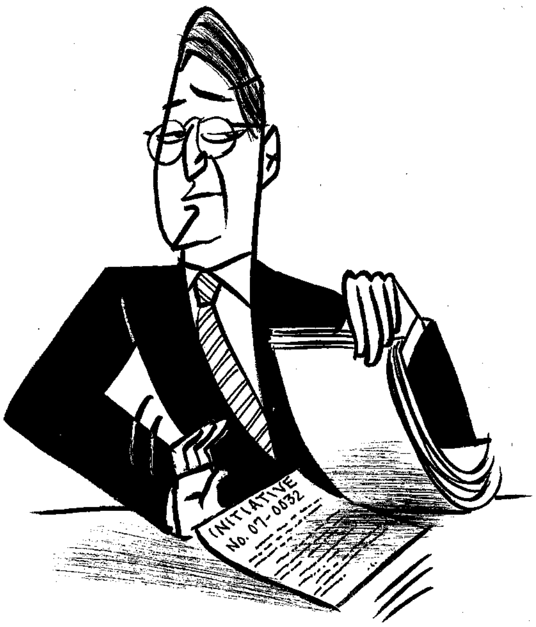


At first glance, next year's Presidential election looks like a blowout. But it might not be. Luckily for the incumbent party, neither George W. Bush nor Dick Cheney will be running; indeed, the election of 2008 will be the first since 1952 without a sitting President or Vice-President on the ballot. At the moment, survey research reflects a generic public preference for a Democratic victory next year. Still, despite everything, there are nearly as many polls showing particular Republicans beating particular Democrats as vice versa. So this election could be another close one. If it is, the winner may turn out to have been chosen not on November 4, 2008, but five months earlier, on June 3rd.

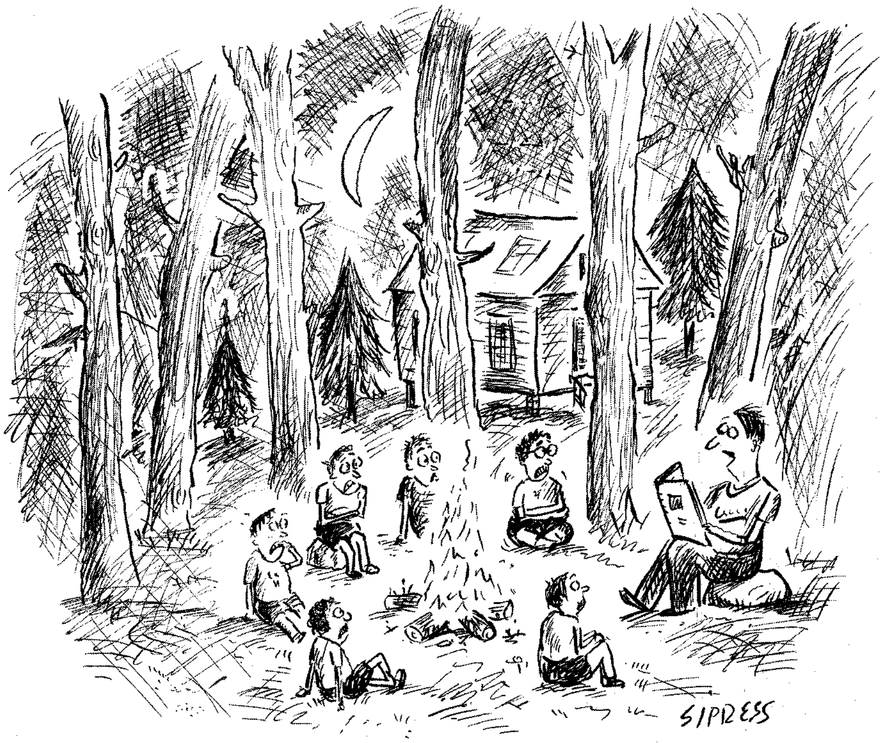
Two weeks ago, one of the most important Republican lawyers in Sacramento quietly filed a ballot initiative that would end the practice of granting all fifty-five of California's electoral votes to the statewide winner. Instead, it would award two of them to the statewide winner and the rest, one by one, to the winner in each congressional district. Nineteen of the fifty-three districts are represented by Republicans, but Bush carried twenty-two districts in 2004. The bottom line is that the initiative, if passed, would spot the Republican ticket something in the neighborhood of twenty electoral votes—votes that it wouldn't get under the rules prevailing in every other sizable state in the Union.

The Tuesday after the first Monday in June is California's traditional Primary Day. But it's not the one that everybody will be paying attention to. Five months ago, the legislature hastily moved the Presidential part up to February 5th, joining a stampede of states hoping to claim a piece of the early-state action previously reserved for Iowa and New Hampshire. June 3rd will be an altogether sleepier, low-turnout affair. There may be a few scattered contests for legislative nominations, but the only statewide items on the ballot will be initiatives. More than two dozen have been filed so far, ranging from a proposal to start a state-run Internet poker site to pay for filling potholes to a redundant slew of anti-gay-marriage measures. Few will make it to the ballot. Many are not even intended to; they're a feint in some byzantine negotiation, or just a cheap attempt to get a little attention—for a two-hundred-dollar fee, anyone can file one. (Actually getting one on the ballot requires more than four hundred thousand signatures, and the outfits that collect them usually charge a dollar or two per signature.) Initiative No. 07-0032—the Presidential Election Reform Act—is different. It's serious. Its backers have access to serious money. And it could pass.



Nominally, the sponsor of No. 07-0032 is Californians for Equal Representation. But that's just a letterhead—there's no such organization. Its address is the office suite of Bell, McAndrews & Hiltachk, the law firm for the California Republican Party, and its covering letter is signed by Thomas W. Hiltachk, the firm's managing partner and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's personal lawyer for election matters. Hiltachk and his firm have been involved in many well-financed ballot initiatives before, including the recall that put Arnold in Sacramento. They specialize in initiatives that are the opposite of what they sound like—the Fair Pay Workplace Flexibility Act of 2006, for example. It

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



"When we left off last night, we were on page 15 of the National Intelligence Estimate."

• •

would have raised the state minimum wage slightly—by a lesser amount than it has since been raised—and, in the fine print, would have made it impossible ever to raise it again except by a two-thirds vote in both houses of the legislature, while, for good measure, eliminating overtime for millions of workers.

"Equal Representation" sounds good, too. And the winner-take-all rule, which is in force in all but two states, does seem unfair on the face of it. (The two are Maine and Nebraska, which use congressional-district allocation. But they are so small—only five districts between them—and so homogeneous that neither has ever split its electoral votes.) It would be obviously unjust for a state to give all its legislative seats to the party that gets the most votes statewide. So why should Party A get a hundred per cent of that state's electoral votes if forty per cent of its voters support Party B? No wonder Democrats and Republicans alike initially react to this proposal in a strongly positive way. To most people, the electoral-college status quo feels intuitively wrong. So does war. But that doesn't make unilateral disarmament a no-brainer.

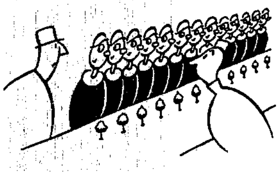
If California does what No. 07-0032 calls for while everybody else is still going with winner take all by state, the real-world result will be to give Party B (in this case the Republicans) an unearned, Ohio-size gift of electoral votes. In a narrow sense, that's good if you like Party B, but not so good if you like Party A (in this case the Democrats). Or if you think that in a democracy everybody ought to play by roughly the same rules. Nor, by the way, is Party B the only offender. Last week, the Democratic-controlled legislature of North Carolina, a state that has gone Republican in every Presidential election since 1976, enthusiastically took up a bill to do the same mischief as the California initiative. The grab would be smaller—it would appropriate perhaps three or four of North Carolina's fifteen electoral votes for the Democrats—but the hands would be just as dirty.

The California initiative flunks even the categorical-imperative test. Imagine, as a thought experiment, that all the states were to adopt this "reform" at once. Electoral votes would still be winner take all, only by congressional district rather than by state. Instead of ten battleground states and forty spectator states, we'd have thirty-five battleground districts and four hundred spectator districts. The red-blue map would be more mottled, and in some states more people might get to see campaign commercials, because media markets usually take in more than one district. But congressional districts are as gerrymandered as human ingenuity and computer power can make them. The electoral-vote result in ninety per cent of the country would still be a foregone conclusion, no matter how close the race.

California Initiative No. 07-0032 is an audacious power play packaged as a step forward for democratic fairness. It's the lotusland equivalent of Tom DeLay's 2003 midterm redistricting in Texas, except with a sweeter smell, a better disguise, and larger stakes. And the only way Californians will reject it is if they have a chance to think about it first.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

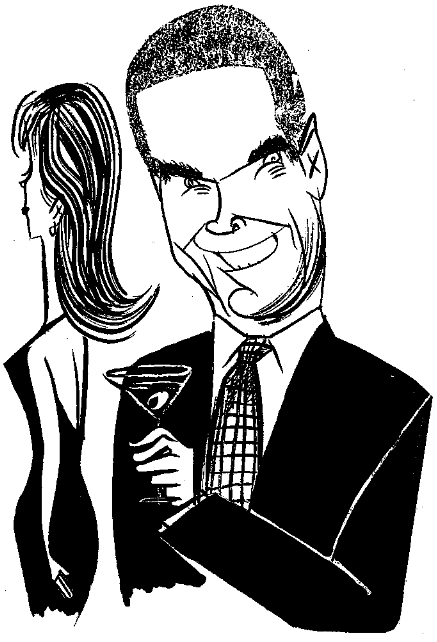
ON THE DOCKET
HEY, LA-A-A-DIES!



"Girls, y'all got one, a night that's special everywhere, from New York to Hollywood," Kool & the Gang sang, in 1979, and every year thereafter. Ladies' nights, however, are lately in peril (and with them, presumably, sales of coconut rum and Coty Wild Musk). In June, Roy Den Hollander, a Manhattan attorney, filed a federal lawsuit alleging that ladies' nights constitute a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. Citing invidious discrimination, he named as defendants the night clubs A.E.R., Lotus, Sol, China Club, and the Copacabana—which charged lower admission fees for women at, respectively, their Remix Thursdays, Velvet List Wednesdays, Models and Bottles Fridays, Metropolis Fridays, and College Party Thursdays.

The other night—nite?—Den Hollander was maneuvering his way past a maroon rope that marked the entrance to LQ, a dance club in midtown. It was a Salsa Wednesday: five bucks for ladies, ten for gents. Den Hollander shelled out and went inside, where he cruised the pink-lit periphery of a dance floor, sparsely populated with wrinkled couples practicing twirls. "Last time I was here for an after-work, you had younger people," he said. "Problem is, the music's so loud. When I hit on a girl, I need to be able to talk to her." Forgoing a complimentary buffet, he made his way to the bar, where he ordered an Absolut vodka gimlet. "I tend to be attracted to black and Latin chicks, and Asian chicks," he said, citing the influence of the twelfth-century Provençal troubadour Guiraut de Bornelh. "He said, 'For a man, attraction goes through the eyes.' " Den Hollander was unfazed by the notion that, as a hound dog, his fight to defeminize clubs was perhaps counter to his self-interest.

Den Hollander likes to keep his age a secret. He was wearing a greenish double-breasted suit and, judging from his gray buzz cut, rubbery grin, and Hypnotiq-blue eyes (courtesy of contacts), seemed to be about forty-five. His frequent references to the Vietnam era, however, put him slightly earlier. "I look around," he said, recalling his college years, "and there are all these girls walking around in see-through skirts and having sex whenever they want to, and there I am, dodging the draft."



Roy Den Hollander

He reached into his pocket and produced a typed forty-one-point list headed "Discrimination against men in America." (Sample gripes: child-custody laws, circumcision, "5% of females have borderline personality disorder.") "What I'm trying to do now in my later years is fight everybody who violates my rights," he continued, bringing to mind a combination of Leon Phelps, Che Guevara, and Travis Bickle.

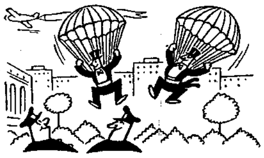
Den Hollander's latest litigative quest (there have been many: defamation suits, a nuisance complaint against neighbors) began in earnest about seven years ago. A former associate at Cravath, Swain & Moore, he had moved to Russia to work as a private investigator. There he met a woman, with whom he returned to New York. They were married in March, 2000, and separated by December. (In Den Hollander v. Flash Dancers Topless Club et al., Den Hollander sued his ex-wife and her employer under the auspices of a civil RICO statute. The suit was dismissed.) "So what happened was, my best buddy in town called and said, 'You've got to get back in the social life,' " Den Hollander recalled. "We'd say, 'Hey, the Copa looks good tonight,' but we wouldn't go, because they're charging double for guys and maybe we didn't have the cash."

The club was filling up as Den Hollander held forth on Title IX ("Sports isn't a big thing to girls, but it's a big thing to guys"), pickup tactics ("You sort of cut the person you're after from the herd"), his personal finances ("Have you heard of the dot-com bubble?"), and his belief that "the Feminazis have infiltrated institutions, and there's been a transfer of rights from guys to girls." Too bad, it was suggested, that his lawsuit is set to be heard by Judge Miriam Goldman Cedarbaum, herself a known female. But Den Hollander was not deterred. "What I think will happen," he said, "is that clubs will reduce the price for guys and increase it for girls. Every guy will have ten or fifteen more dollars in his pocket, which the girls will then manipulate into getting more drinks out of him. If they drink more, they'll have more fun, and so will us guys. And then when she wakes up in the morning she'll be able to do what she always does: blame the man."

In his lawsuit, Den Hollander invokes a precedent: Seidenberg and DeCrow v. McSorley's Old Ale House (1970), in which female patrons gained the right to drink alongside the menfolk. Reached last week, Karen DeCrow, an attorney and the vice-president of the Greater Syracuse chapter of the National Organization for Women, reacted evenly to news of Den Hollander and his unlikely alignment. "It probably wouldn't be very fun to go out to dinner with him," she said, "but, insofar as you've told me about his theory, I agree with it." Since winning the McSorley's case, DeCrow hasn't returned to the bar. "It would be fun to go back and have a glass of ale," she said, "but in the past twenty-five years it hasn't seemed urgent."

—*Lauren Collins*

OUR CHANGING WORLD
MOATED MANHATTAN



Manhattan already has a moat—the rivers Harlem, Hudson, and East—but this on its own will not suffice, at least against the incursions of would-be terrorists and unwelcome drivers. And so the city's defenders, in recognition of these dangerous and congested times, must seek other means of fortification. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, they experimented with planters and bollards—those bulky barriers guarding skyscrapers—but last fall began removing many of them, because they were redundant, weaponizable, disruptive of the pedestrian flow, or useful only as ashtrays.

Recently, other plans have come to light, which together suggest the creation of a kind of electronic super-moat. Already under way is an effort to place, around the city, radiation monitors, which will alert authorities to any radioactive materials that might be in the vicinity. And in recent months the Police Department has been developing a scheme, inspired by London's so-called Ring of Steel, to set up a web of thousands of surveillance cameras around town, starting in lower Manhattan. The police will be able to deploy remote-control swinging gates—latter-day portcullises—to block streets, should the cameras suggest that something sinister is afoot. Finally, there is Mayor Bloomberg's effort to introduce congestion pricing. Under the system, drivers entering or leaving any part of Manhattan south of Eighty-sixth Street during certain hours will have to pay for the privilege. This will require the installation of a ring of sensors and cameras, which will be capable of photographing license-plate numbers, for the purpose of accurate billing.

For centuries, cities have been gradually opening themselves up, shedding their walls and sprawling outward, so that their boundaries are ever more porous and blurred. (One great catalyst for this was the automobile; another was Napoleon, who decreed that walls surrounding Italian cities be taken down.) So it is notable, and perhaps inauspicious, that a reversion to a distinctly medieval "Who goes there?" approach is in full swing.

According to Mark Munn, a historian of ancient Greece at Penn State, the Roman Empire began erecting fixed barriers, or *limes*, along its frontier late in the first century, in a tacit acknowledgment that its expansion had reached its limit. Over time, these outer fortifications gave way, and the Romans, in retreat, instead began to fortify their cities—creating, as Munn put it the other day, "nodes of urbanism."

Antecedents abound. Munn, who wrote "The Defense of Attica: The Dema Wall and the Boiotian War of 378-375 B.C.," drew parallels between the plight of the fourth-century B.C. Athenians and that of the citizens of New York. Having lost the Peloponnesian War, Athens built a vast network of forts and watchtowers, situated on mountaintops, six to eight miles apart. "They ringed the city," Munn said, explaining how messages—typically fire signals—were sent between the watchtowers. Aeneas Tacticus, in a manual of defense strategy, advanced methods for detecting infiltrators, too—sleeper cells sneaking weapons into the city in wagons full of barley. As for modes of finer-grained filtration, such as those being implemented in New York, Munn said, "The ancient world never had I.D. cards or passports."

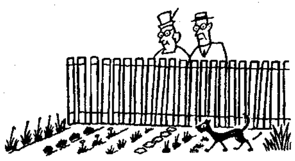
One more forebear: the dystopian American helltown, as imagined by John Carpenter in the 1981 science-fiction film "Escape from New York." In the nineteen-seventies, New York was enough of a mess to inspire the notion that it would be a place no one would want to get into; in the movie, set in 1997, the city is a giant walled prison, where the inmates run wild. The police commissioner sends a new prisoner, Snake Plissken, played by Kurt Russell, into the city to rescue the President, whose plane has crashed there.

Reached on the phone last week at his home in the Hollywood Hills, Carpenter recalled how he'd dreamed up an impermeable New York, nearly thirty years ago: "You have an island situation. You just get a map. You mine the bridges, then build a wall on the other side that you can't get over. The only way you can get in is from the air." Apprised of some of the measures that New York is now taking to keep people out, rather than in, Carpenter said, "God bless you guys. It's going to cost you a lot of money."

—*Nick Paumgarten*

DOWN, BOY DEPT.

DOGTOWN



If you find yourself on the service road of the Major Deegan, in the shadow of the Cross Bronx Expressway, between the train tracks and the Harlem River, and you hear loud barking interspersed with the crowing of roosters, do not be alarmed. Follow your ears (and the flies) to the chain-link fence, and, while noting the "No Trespassing" and "Beware of Dog" signs, introduce yourself politely to whoever might be sitting nearby, at the entrance of what appears to be a canine shantytown—plywood huts, wire cages, tarps, and assorted vehicles packed into half an acre near the base of High Bridge.

The land belongs to the New Tabernacle Baptist Church, which for the past eleven years has run a kind of nonprofit kennel club for urban hunting dogs, carrying on a local, word-of-mouth tradition that dates to around the Second World War. A New Tabernacle volunteer named Lewis Jones (everyone calls him Lou) serves as the chief groundskeeper, tending to, among other things, a charred mound of beer cans that passes for a waste-disposal system. Fifteen dog shanties house about fifty beagles, coon hounds, and Italian mastiffs. At one point, the kennel had an official name—the Highbridge Hunting Club—but its charter has lapsed. The dogs' owners do not pay rent, although donations to the church are encouraged.

One afternoon last week, a man named Peppy (Lou calls him Lucky) was sitting on a rusty bench while facing a pen full of mastiffs that were pawing aggressively at the gate. "These are guard dogs," he said. "The rest are bird dogs, rabbit dogs." (Lou says that the mastiffs are for "hunting the big game, like lions and tigers.") A few roosters wandered around freely, speaking their minds. Peppy had on a green T-shirt with a picture of a snarling dog and the words "Remington Steel: We breed with overseas methods." He said that he'd been raising dogs in the Bronx for almost two years—an arriviste. "There's not too many places in the city you can keep dogs," Peppy said. "If you're into hunting, you heard of this place."

Soon, Peppy's business partner, Ross, arrived, carrying a couple of boxes of syringes, for applying tick and flea repellent. The two men opened the nearest padlock and began attending to their pooches, the most stubborn of whom was named Isabella. A couple of albino cats prowled the perimeter. The roosters kept crowing. "Cats came, I guess, because of the rats," Ross said. "See, the rats will come to try to eat the dog food."

"Got rats down here about the size of an arm," Peppy said. "Cats eat the rats."

"I guess it's just a nature thing," Ross said.

And the roosters? "That's old hunting tradition," Peppy said. "It's a Southern thing."

Guests are not common, and the conversation proceeds at a languid pace. "The A.S.P.C.A. comes down sometimes," Peppy said. "Sanitation comes by to see that it don't smell." Occasionally, someone from a rowing club upriver will wander by, having beached at a wet-weather discharge station near the Metro-North rail yards.

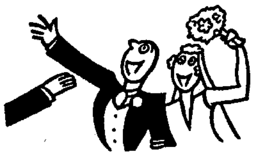
"One guy approached us—he wanted to bring some pits," Ross said, referring to pit bulls. "We try to steer clear of that."

"He might be Michael Vick-in' it," Peppy said, referring to the Atlanta Falcons quarterback, who has been indicted on charges of helping to run a dogfighting ring. (Last week, Vick pleaded not guilty.) Peppy and Ross's dogs don't fight, they said, but they do compete. Ross used to breed "Rotts"—Rottweilers. Now he prefers Cane Corsos, a variety of Italian mastiff. "They're the No. 1 guard dog in the world," he said. He also enters them in events organized by the Protection Sports Association. "You got 'weight pull,' 'hard catch,' " he said. Then he described an event in which a man hides behind a tepee and, on command, a dog charges and lunges for the man's arm. Isabella paced and drooled.

A recent visitor, still bewildered upon leaving such a place (the nearest subway stop is twenty-five minutes away on foot, across multiple highways), tried recounting his experience—the hounds, the roosters, the cats, the tepee—to Joseph Pentangelo, a local A.S.P.C.A. official. "You sound like you went to Oz," he said, and added, "You're not allowed to own roosters in New York City." He wasn't aware of the New Tabernacle kennel, but he mentioned that the week before he'd been called to retrieve a horse that had got loose on Pelham Parkway. "This guy appeared to be squatting, keeping it as a pet," Pentangelo said. "He'd made this stable using the box from a delivery truck, and then he fashioned a corral out of wire and police barricade and pickle barrels."

—*Ben McGrath*

REWIND DEPT.
WHOSE WEDDING?



Taking out the trash one day about ten years ago, Jeanne Liotta, an East Village filmmaker, noticed a battered 16-mm. movie projector lying next to the curb. She rescued a reel of film from the machine and stuck it on her living-room shelf. Last August, Liotta decided to take the film to Anthology Film Archives for Home Movie Day, an annual event in which old 8-, 16-, and 35-mm. reels are carted out of attics and basements for airing on the public screen. As a rule, the movies are earnest documentations of significant life events (a bris, a deer hunt, the purchase of a giant lobster claw). "But this one—we started calling it the mystery wedding movie—was different," Katie Trainor, Home Movie Day's co-founder, said recently of Liotta's entry. "We put this one on the screen, and, right away, everybody was, like, 'Whoa!' "

The film is twelve minutes long and in black-and-white, without sound. It starts with ambient shots of ducks in Central Park, moves to a wedding in Brooklyn, and ends with dancing and cake in a crepe-paper-strewn apartment. The bride is young and pearlescent with crinoline and hairspray; the groom is pencil-mustached and bullfighter handsome. The bridal party prepares in a bedroom. The camera fixes on a bridesmaid, cuts to the crying mother, then goes back to the bridesmaid. Behind her is a poster, tacked to a patch of floral wallpaper: "José Torres, Bobby Barnes, sábado 25."

"See the shot-and-reverse-shot editing?" Andrew Lampert, Anthology's archivist, asked recently. "The pacing, the cinematography—it's not a normal home movie. It's like a National Film Board of Canada short, or an early William Klein film. We had no idea what to make of it."

Neither did Craig Lopez, who had come to Home Movie Day to screen what he hoped was his ninth-birthday party but which turned out to be ten minutes of dogs riding ponies and chimpanzees doing acrobatics. ("My family was in the circus," he said.) Lopez was fascinated by the mystery wedding movie. When he got home, he typed his only clue—the names he'd glimpsed on the screen—into Google and learned that a boxer named José Torres had fought Bobby Barnes in 1961. The bout took place in Paterson, New Jersey, and José (Chegüi) Torres knocked out Barnes in the third round. Four years later, he became the first Latin-American world light-heavyweight boxing champion. "I spent the next four hours online," Lopez said. "This guy was like the Hispanic Muhammad Ali." Looking at pictures of Torres online, Lopez realized that he was the groom from the movie.

Lopez found Torres's telephone number, and called it. A woman answered the phone. She was Ramona Torres, Chegüi's wife. "This man said, 'I watched your wedding movie,' " Ramona recalled. She assumed that it was a prank call. "What else could I think?" she said. "By a miracle, he was calling on the day of our forty-fifth wedding anniversary!"

Until recently, Chegüi and Ramona lived in the West Village. Not long ago, Ramona welcomed a visitor inside and into the living room, where José was sitting.

"Oh, man, it was a beautiful wedding," José said. "We had it at Cus D'Amato's apartment—my manager."

"No, the wedding was in the church, Chegüi," Ramona said. "The party was in Cus's apartment, after."

José said, "Cus paid for everything!"

Ramona said, "José wasn't even professional then. He was making five hundred dollars a fight, not enough to get married. We had had an argument, and I left." She went on, "Cus called and told me if I come back now I marry him right away."

Chegüi went on to become a social activist, author, and occasional actor in several films made by Norman Mailer, whom he, in turn, taught to box. (This week, as part of a Mailer film festival, the wedding movie will be screened at Anthology.) At the wedding, Pete Hamill was the best man, and Billy Powers, a longtime art director at *Time*, manned the camera.

Shortly after the wedding, Powers gave the only copy of the film to Ramona and Chegüi, who later took it to be restored and never got it back. After its rediscovery, last year, a DVD copy was rushed to the Torreses. Watching it again, Ramona said, "I remember these things like I'm seeing them right now."

—*Charles Graeber*

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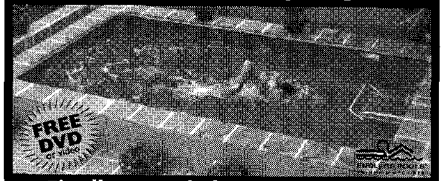

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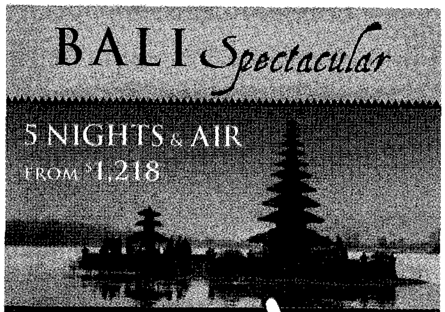

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THE SPORTING SCENE

RIP VAN GOLFER

Notes from Oakmont.

BY JOHN McPHEE

For many years, I have had a recurrent dream in which Lew Weiland's headlights, in the dark of night, appear like dawn above the tenth fairway. I am standing in a hazard that is really just a pond, and have been looking for balls. Against the dark bottom in the dark water, they glow like moons. There is muck between my toes and muck around my ankles, and I cannot easily move. Neither can Mike Hettinger or John Graham. We are caddies. Weiland is the greenskeeper. It is his custom and assumed priority to drain the pond from time to time, gather the lost balls, and split profits with the club pro, who sells them to the members. Golf balls have been a great scarcity since Pearl Harbor. The aurora over the tenth fairway grows ever brighter as Weiland races up rising ground, comes over a ridge, and floods us, stuck there, with direct light.

Caddies could play the course in the evening, and we did so into deep dusk. Aged thirteen, fourteen, I loved playing golf, even after carrying the big leather bags of lumber dealers, financiers, insurance salesmen, and osteopaths—going "doubles eighteen"—in the high humidity of a New Jersey summer. We were paid a dollar a bag, and tipped, if at all, in copper. No carts. I caddied only sporadically, when I needed money for a basketball or a baseball mitt. I caddied in Wisconsin one summer, and went to the Tam O'Shanter tournament in Chicago (Bobby Locke, the knickered South African; Jimmy Demaret, at 290 yards one of the longest balls in golf). And in 1950 I was beside the ropeless fairways glimpsing Ben Hogan in the Open at Merion. Soon, though, a day of epiphany came, on a specific round, when, aged twenty-four, clearly, if not for the first time, I envisioned golf as a psychological Sing Sing in which I was an inmate. Still young enough to effect an escape, I picked up the ball I was playing—Dunlop Maxfli 2—and put it in my pocket. I quit cold, not only as a player but also as an on-site spectator, and have not been on a golf course with a club in my hand since that day.

Yet now, after a fast-forwarding dormancy of more than fifty years, I am inside the ropes and close beside a back-nine tee, watching Tiger Woods making arcs in the air as he prepares his next shot in the U.S. Open. The ball is on its tee. A couple of yards toward the back of the tee box, Woods stands motionless, feet together, his gaze levelled on the fairway, his posture as perpendicular as military attention. He steps forward and addresses the ball. About to hit, he hears the long whistle of a locomotive, on a track quite nearby. Approaching a grade crossing, the train completes its trombone chords: long, long, short, long. Woods backs off, waits. Now he re-addresses the ball. But another grade crossing is close to the first one. The engineer, at his console, again depresses his mushroom plunger. Woods again backs off, idly swings his club, resumes his pre-shot routine. Now, reorganized, he is over the ball, but once again the engineer depresses the plunger. Backing off, Woods looks up at the sky. If only that engineer could know what he is interrupting, and whom, he would go away with a lifetime memento. The four-chord signal has become a little softer; and Woods is more than a little impatient. After two longs, he drills the ball on the short.

While the train was passing and whistling, it overrode the sound of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, which now, like breaking surf, returns. Seven holes are east of the turnpike, and eleven holes are west of the turnpike. Railroad track is close beside the highway. It could be said that no hazard on any golf course comes anywhere near rivalling these two, but in fact they are to a remarkable extent not only out of play but out of sight. Like a wide-open V, the topography of this great golf course in Oakmont, Pennsylvania, the first ever listed as a National Historic Landmark, descends from the clubhouse to the turnpike and then rises on the other side, as if the road were a river. Yet the right-of-way is so deeply incised that the road and the railroad are invisible, except when you are crossing them on one of the long, vertiginous footbridges that connect the first green to the second tee and the eighth green to the ninth tee.

No golfer present is going to finish this tournament under par, a fact that will not be unpleasing to the United States Golf Association, which chooses the annual venues and controls every aspect of the tournament, inside and outside the ropes. The U.S.G.A.'s annual intention is to make the U.S. Open globally the most difficult test in golf. By the players' clear consensus, that is what it is. The U.S.G.A. has chosen Oakmont, which is fourteen miles from Pittsburgh, eight times in eighty years. Why? Its credentials seem counterintuitive. It was laid out by a complete amateur at golf-course architecture—a fin-de-siècle iron-and-steel baron named Henry Clay Fownes, who, in his lifetime, designed one course, after Andrew Carnegie introduced him to the game. In the words of Rand Jerris, the U.S.G.A.'s chief archivist, "Fownes wanted to make the hardest course in America. He did. A hundred years later, and only a few yards longer, it still is the hardest course in America."

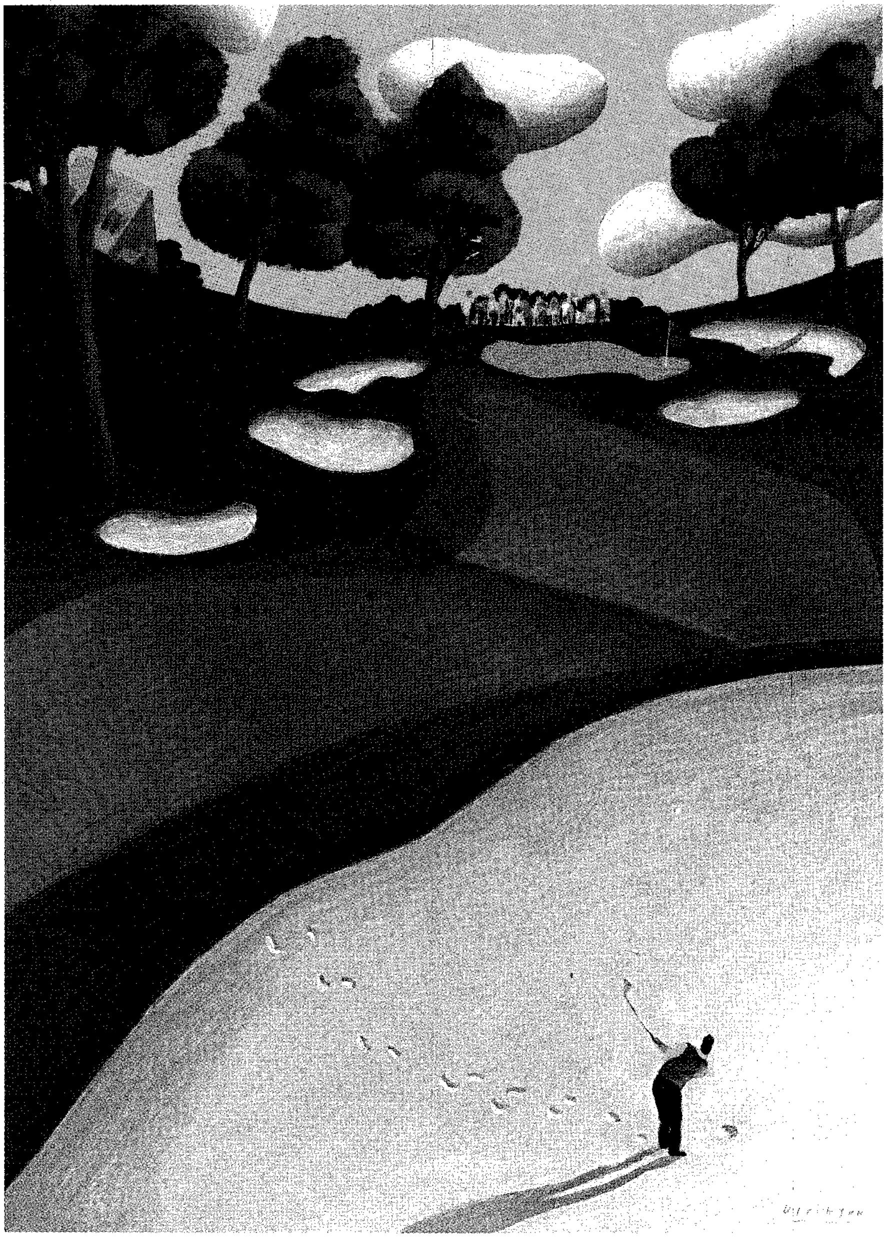
Fairways are exceptionally narrow. Beside them, balls disappear even in primary rough. After the secondary, the grass is so high that it could be mown and sold as hay. Where drainage ditches hug some fairways, the rough is kept short between fairway and ditch so that errant balls can find the ditch. Most golf courses have about seventy bunkers. Oakmont has two hundred and ten. Balls become fried eggs in the soft quartz sand. One bunker, between parallel fairways and ribbed with grass benches, is 100 yards long. Seventeen is a short par 4, a dogleg with a drivable green. If you try driving it, you have to carry six bunkers at the dogleg and avoid five more bunkers penannular to the green. The largest one beside the green is Big Mouth. If you go into it, you can't see out. Big Mouth is eleven feet deep.

Oakmont has the longest par 3 (more than 300 yards if the pin is back) and the longest par 5 (nearly 700 yards) in the history of the U.S. Open, but those lengths—like the bunkers and the roughs and the astringent fairways—are modest challenges to these golfers relative to the vitreous greens. A slow six-foot putt misses, and goes thirty feet past the hole. A bunker shot lands ten feet above the hole, rolls, turns left, rolls back past the hole, and ends up twenty-five feet below it. Television pictures tend to flatten golf greens. You don't see on television the actual character of the putting surfaces—how warped they may be, how legible. Aaron Baddeley, an Australian born in the United States, magically sinks a ten-foot putt that exactly replicates the letter "U." Paul Casey, who is English, gets a media interview after Round 2, celebrating his eccentric score of 66. Under winds and in hot sun, the greens are becoming ever firmer and faster, he says. "The greens are going to get blue. This is the toughest golf course I've ever played. It's brutal."

What will the other players make of his great score?

"They probably will think I walked off after fourteen."

Oakmont greens are not covered with bent grass, as greens are on most Eastern courses. Oakmont uses a *Poa annua* of its own creation which bears few seeds and therefore results in what golfers describe as a "less pebbly" surface. No doubt about that. Ball after ball hits the greens, releases, and rolls to kingdom come. It doesn't help that many greens tilt left or right, or that even more greens tilt backward—away from the approach shot. The deep rough, the deep bunkers, and the monofilament fairways notwithstanding, the greens are where the Open will be won and lost. There is



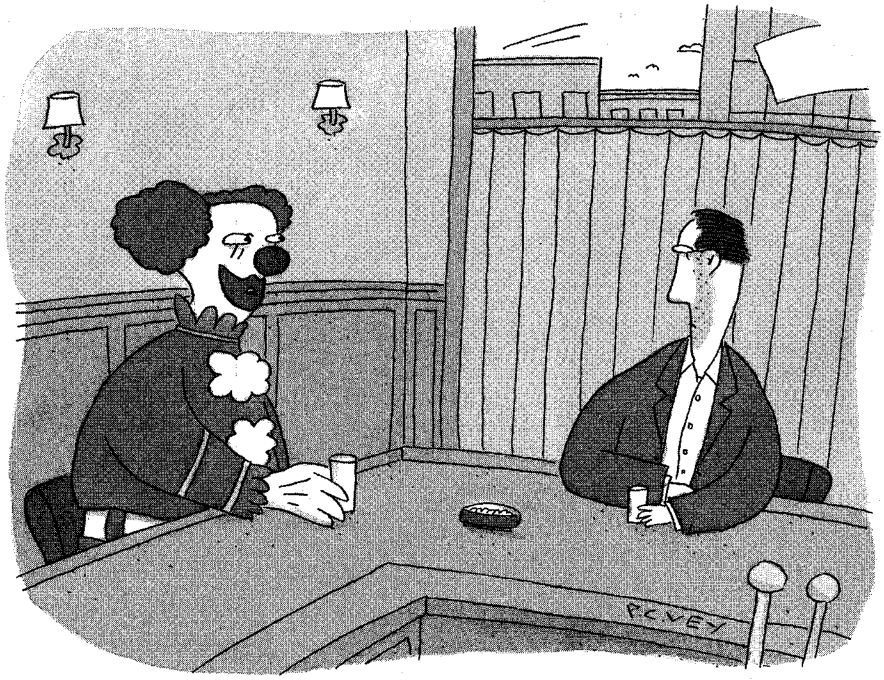
MARK ULRIKSEN

less truth than pathetic optimism when someone says, "The greens are holding!"

This one week in June is when the U.S.G.A. makes essentially all the money that pays for its twelve other national tournaments and for everything from its equipment-testing facilities to its museum. This has been accomplished, outside the ropes, by turning the U.S. Open Championship into a theme park with deep connotations of mall. At the western end of the course is the clubhouse, and at the eastern end—just inside the main gate—is the Merchandise Pavilion. The Open crowd is necessarily limited to thirty-five thousand people, who pay ninety-five to a hundred and forty dollars per day. A goodly number of them don't make it much past the Merchandise Pavilion, a boutique in a tent that covers thirty-six thousand square feet. It sells sweaters, vests, wind shirts, caps, jewelry, umbrellas, ball markers, balls, bags, belts—all of which bear the U.S. Open-Oakmont logo. There are more cash registers (fifty-two) than there are at L. L. Bean, and during the tournament the Merchandise Pavilion alone can take in fifteen or sixteen million dollars. Like the ancestral L. L. Bean in Freeport, Maine, the Merchandise Pavilion is now accompanied by other commercial enterprises, in smaller tents. They border a lawn where chairs and shaded tables face a two-hundred-square-foot outdoor television screen so that paying guests can watch the tournament without going on the course. The islands and aisles in the Merchandise Pavilion are studded with TV screens, too, and the place ordinarily teems with people, but when the screens show Tiger Woods going off the second tee, from which he will walk a thousand feet to the second green and the third tee—the features of the golf course that are closest to the Merchandise Pavilion—the big tent empties out as if someone had shouted "Fire!" A surge of people moves to the edge of the course for glimpses of the world's greatest golfer since Bob Jones, among them those who don't wholly believe that. After he has made his drive and gone off down the third fairway, the Merchandise Pavilion refills.

Close by is the Trophy Club, a tent in which—with an admission ticket worth a hundred and forty dollars—you can spend the day watching the tournament at a cool bar. The Trophy Club is a public version of the corporate-hospitality tents, with their decks and picket fences, which, forty-seven in all, contiguously line the edges of the course as if they were horse barns. On upholstered furniture in air-conditioned space, a guest can develop gratitude to MassMutual, Lexus, or PNC Financial Services while watching the golf on television and hearing the more than candid comments of Johnny Miller, whose 63 on this course thirty-four years ago remains the best-ever final round to win a U.S. Open Championship. The corporate-hospitality tents are rentals from the U.S.G.A. that cost as much as $175,000, not including food or drink. The I.R.S. deserves an honorary tent. When Woods goes by, the tentees step out on deck and into the heat, and line the picket fences.

The fact that some people do this is testimony to those who do not. Hardy people jam the course. The full thirty-five thousand would overload it. They are not all wearing white, but somehow collectively they turn bright white, causing the fairways to seem like streets and themselves like plowed snow. Most are in shorts, golf shirts, running shoes, and low-cut socks, and around them is an ambience of passion for the game of golf, whether they are sitting in grandstands, lining fairway ropes, speed-walking the fairway crossings, or even sleeping under peripheral trees. A high proportion are in good shape, with smooth muscular calves and flat stomachs. A high proportion, too, have glistening foreheads and bulging corporations. In ever taller stacks, they accumulate as souvenirs the U.S. Open-Oakmont-logoed containers they have emptied of beer, which they seem to drink in greater quantity than they would on couches at home.



"I tell the truth, and sometimes it's funny."

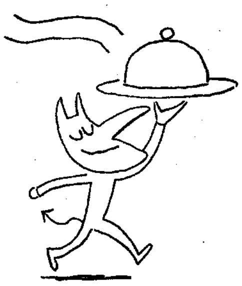
This is an Open in which "saving a bogey" has become a mark of honor. Somebody might win that way. For the first time in thirty-three years, no player is under par after two rounds. It was thirty-three years ago that Sandy Tatum, the chairman of the U.S.G.A.'s championship committee, articulated the annual mission of the tournament, saying, "We're not trying to humiliate the best players in the world. We're simply trying to identify who they are." There is not even one hole on which this year's lineup is averaging under par. Other athletic games are played in uniform settings. In this one, the idiosyncratic course enters the competition. It seems to have no weaknesses.

Off the northeast corner of the clubhouse, an oak rises through the front row of a grandstand as if it had selected the best seat. This tree is my *querencia*. I discovered the base of it early on—after walking the course in search of vantage points, after trudging en masse with photographers trailing Tiger Woods, after lying on a knoll high above the par-3 sixth while group after group played through. The predominant sound out there is the stifled roar from invisible greens as putts lip out or stop barely shy or in various other ways come close but do not fall. Like the sound of distant bombs, these random detonations tell their stories to the golfers, some of whom are literally playing it by ear. If the roar is not stifled, it's a birdie or an eagle or a chip-in or a long putt curling home. Golfers and gallery alike, what no one is seeing on the course is most of the action. Television, for its part, sees more but is necessarily so selective that the result is a species of highlight film.

Of the on-site spectators, many elect not to move. They will choose grandstands beside greens—even back-nine greens—and fill them up solid long before the first pairing, on the first tee, tees off. In uninterrupted sun, the people in the grandstands sit patiently for several hours before the first trooping group (the golfers, the dromedary caddies, the rules official, the walking scorer, the standard-bearer straight out of the Tenth Legion holding up a placard bearing the names of the players and their current scores) appears on the fairway, approaches, arrives, chips, putts, and moves on. To shape the masses along the fairways and prevent them also from trampling the high rough (thereby creating good lies for bad shots), eight and a half miles of rope separate the public from the professional. Around my neck is a black lanyard with white block letters: "U.S.G.A. U.S. OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP." Flapping from the lanyard is a green plastic card that says "MEDIA" and bears my face, my name, the name of this magazine, and the access code MRL (Media Center, Practice Areas, Locker Room). I was also issued an elastic armband tight enough to serve as a tourniquet. Royal blue with white block letters, it says:

INSIDE ROPES ACCESS
MUST BE VISIBLE AT ALL TIMES
MEDIA

I am wearing it around my belt, where it hangs sideways, because the photographers' armbands are all on their belts, and the style is patently cool. A few feet inside the ropes, I can go anywhere on the course, but things seem to have changed since 1950, and I'm not sure where anywhere might be. I look for clues from other people with notebooks but don't see anyone to emulate. I can walk inside the ropes where people, roped out, have been waiting six hours for a glimpse they want to remember. I not only can walk in front of them; I can stop. The protocol is to kneel or sit and not block the view. This, nonetheless, is not the most comfortable relationship I can imagine forming with these people. I once rode around the southern tip of Manhattan and partway up the East River with a rich man in his yacht. It was the Fourth of July, evening, and the public fireworks were about to begin. The public, fifty deep, lined the edge of South Street by the water. The pyrotechnics would be set off from a barge in the river. The yacht—actually, a small ship—pulled over to the South Street embankment and tied up directly in front of five thousand people. Inside the ropes at Oakmont, I'm thinking rich man's yacht. Following various golfers from tee to green, I walk alone inside the ropes, past the silent majority, feeling unloved. Sometimes I slip outside the ropes to recover my self-esteem. Following Tiger Woods is relatively painless. I just slip into the pack of photographers, and go where they go, which is always cheeky and close. After nine holes with him on Day Two, I shrugged and came back to my tree.



For a couple of hours in early afternoon, it provides some protection from the stroking sun—no small thing on a layout that has recently been denuded of five thousand trees. To elude the objections of members of the club, trees were torn out like scallions under cover of darkness and were replaced before dawn by soil and sod. Planted when the course was sixty years old, they changed its character. Henry Clay Fownes meant his Oakmont to suggest the wide-open, windswept, subtly structured links courses of Scotland—St. Andrews, Muirfield, Royal Dornoch, Carnoustie—which are on the emergent, rebounding coastline of the North Sea. That's a hard thing to bring off on the Appalachian Plateau, but Fownes did achieve at least an architectural reference, perhaps under the influence of Andrew Carnegie. Now, with so many trees gone, this scene from the oak at the clubhouse corner is unimpeded across a hundred and fifty acres of golf, half the course in one glance. From the high ground, the scene is almost aerial. The blimp overhead has a less interesting view.

This big oak, a survivor if ever there was one, is close to the eighteenth green. It is very close also to golfers and caddies on the twelfth tee, and close as well to the tenth tee. The eleventh green is just downslope. Such bunching reflects the antiquity of the course. Architects of modern layouts—mindful of, among other things, liability lawyers—place their tee boxes farther from connecting greens. When the golfers hit off on the twelfth, the crack of contact from their hydrocephalic drivers makes it seem like a rifle range. If someone happens to be putting on the eighteenth green, players on the twelfth tee go silent, hold off politely, and wait. Groups on the tenth tee do the same. The players on the tees are not only being careful not to spoil the putting but are also aware that any decent putt on the eighteenth green, let alone a great one or a great near-miss, is going to set off one of those crowd-roar bombs which could screw a drive in mid-swing.

The view from the oak, downhill over all these features, comprehends an arc of ninety degrees, from the eighteenth fairway, on the left, to the tenth fairway, on the right. It contains the whole of the back nine, and—in this uneven, periglacial topography—only a few humps and lumps hide anything. Trees line the arc beyond the bounds of play. Along the fairways, outside the ropes, people move like littoral drift around the steady populations in the grandstands. When Woods is coming through, or Phil Mickelson while he lasts, these framing galleries visibly thicken. You see them cross fairways where and when permitted, always marshalled with ropes, as intent as pilgrims on their way to Santiago. From this perspective, and in this heat, you can comprehend the dimensions and degree of difficulty not only of this course but of this game.

Because I don't know any better, and have been slow to get with it after fifty years, I have stayed under this tree for as much as seven consecutive hours while the sun turns me into beef jerky. I'm in front of the grandstand and inside the ropes, and I don't have to worry about blocking the view of anyone. The Oakmont oak is doing that for me. Sandra Day O'Connor walks in front of me, in tan slacks and a broad-brimmed hat. Photographers come and go, their numbers in direct proportion to the street recognition of the players currently on the tees or green. A long-gray-haired photographer slowly shuffles by, so laden down with dangling bags and bundles that he looks as if he sleeps in cardboard. At last—like a faint aurora over the tenth fairway—dawn comes to Rip Van Golfer. The photographers, out of absolute necessity, are out here trekking in the blistering sun. They have no alternative. There's a relative absence of notepads, because the writers are somewhere else.

THERE IS NO TIME, SHE WRITES

We have to bomb the rebel cities
from a great height, find shelter
for the refugees, carry a sick kitten
to the shade of a blighted elm,
fall in love, walk by the breakwater,
learn the words to separate,
marry, see a lawyer, grow old,

and always the wind seethes
in the bladelike leaves,
always the ant under its burden,
proud and indomitable, *she writes,*
always the faint music, the touch
of the other's hand, and no way
to return, or even turn,
no way to face ourselves:

writing this, I pressed so hard
she says, the words are embedded
in the grain of the desk
and it is dark but I sense you
listening, trying to frame an answer
there where the dark turns inward
and a small bell chimes
in the stupefying heat.

—*D. Nurkse*

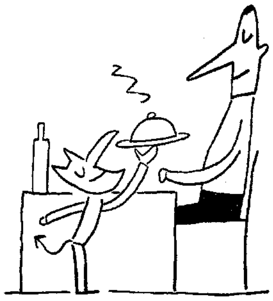
When I was nine years old, a black sweater with orange stripes on the sleeves and the number 33 front and back was made for me by the same company that made the uniforms of the Princeton football team. On fall Saturdays, I ran out onto the field with them in Palmer Stadium and stood on the sidelines through the game. My father, whose practice was sports medicine before that term came into use, was their doctor. After they scored, I went behind the goalpost and caught the extra point. One miserable November afternoon, soaked in a freezing rain when I was ten, I turned around and looked up at the press box. I saw people up there with typewriters, sitting dry under a roof in what I knew to be heated space. In that precise moment, I decided to become a writer.

In the U.S.G.A.'s Media Center, I can feel again what was going on in my ten-year-old mind. The Media Center is larger than the Merchandise Pavilion. Unobtrusive, tucked away behind the clubhouse, it is the exact length of a Los Angeles-class attack submarine, and three or four times as wide. In all, the place consists of four crisply cool and contiguous tents, the largest of which contains the cable-connected desks of three hundred and fifty journalists who do not have to leave the premises to cover the U.S. Open. They see more of it if they don't. The great contemporary names in golf journalism are here: Robert Sommers, Dave Anderson, Lorne Rubenstein, Tim Rosaforte, Peter Kessler, and the rest. Damon Hack. The desk locations are loosely ranked: Associated Press, front and center; New York *Times*, Row 2; Washington *Post*, Row 3; *Sports Illustrated*, Row 4; *The Scotsman*, Row 5; *Sports Nippon*, Row 6; *Golf World*, Row 7; Sydney *Morning Herald*, Row 8; *Golf Digest* (India), Row 9. The sitting journalists, about ten per cent women, face a scoreboard a hundred feet wide that presents in real time the hole-to-hole progress of not just the leaders but every player. Flanking the board are two thirty-six-square-foot screens to which NBC and ESPN, without graphics or commentary, feed the action from outdoors. If a journalist's laptop develops technical problems, no need to call Bangalore. The U.S.G.A.'s own I.T. support staff will help. Off one end of this magnified city room is a dining area with twenty-three large round tables, on each table a rosebud *en vase.* A dozen three- and four-foot full-broadcast-television screens are arranged so that everybody at every table can see and hear Johnny Miller. In mid- to late afternoon, if action on the course becomes especially dramatic, the dining area fills up.

After players finish their rounds, some are asked to do a short press conference called a "flash interview," which takes place in an enclave outside the locker room, where the public is excluded, and fencing separates the journalists from the golfer. To leave the Media Center and participate in a flash interview, you have to get up and walk a hundred yards or so, basically around the north end of the clubhouse. Few do. It has been suggested to the U.S.G.A. that Opens be wired so that journalists can participate in flash interviews without leaving their desks, but that is not in the offing at present. Fewer than twenty do the flash interview with Aaron Baddeley, never mind that he has just finished Round 3 and leads the field by two strokes. Fewer than twenty interview Paul Casey, who shot a 60 when he was at Arizona State to break Tiger Woods's N.C.A.A. record and is now strongly threatening to outdo him here. Listening to Casey's responses to questions, a guy from *Golf Digest* is blowing bubblegum. No more than forty journalists out of three hundred and fifty come to a third-round flash with Woods himself.

If a golfer has had a particularly notable round, he is invited on to a more formal press conference in a large space in the Media Center with television cameras and folding chairs. Rand Jerris, at a table surrounded by green vegetation and adorned with enough flowers to suggest a funeral as well as a celebration, asks the first couple of questions. Then the attending press, often a group of fewer than thirty, takes over. At both forms of interview, the majority are not attending and taking notes because a court stenographer is doing it for them. With breathtaking celerity—within ten minutes—transcripts of both the flash interviews and the longer interviews are produced, reproduced, machine-stapled, never proofread, and placed in wall racks, where they are collected by the journalists. "The day will come when we e-mail interviews to them at their desks," Jerris says. If a golfer gets off a good quote—such as Angel Cabrera saying, "There are some players that have psychologists, sportologists; I smoke"—the quote is going to appear in countless newspapers and magazines as if Cabrera had whispered it into the writer's ear. Through the tournament, quotes taken by the court stenographer are repeated liberally on NBC, occasionally on simulated plaques beside pictures of the quotees.

Media Center interview two days before the tournament:



Ernie Els: These are the toughest greens we'll ever play in U.S. Open history, or even any other golf tournament we play.

Flash, Thursday:

Q. How mentally tough is the grind?

Tiger Woods: Well, if you play most tournaments, even a major like in Augusta, even other difficult majors that we play, you probably are going to have one or two shots where you can take off, you know? It's not that hard of a shot. You can close your eyes and probably hit it either in the fairway or on the greens, it's an easy shot. On this golf course there are none, and no easy birdies, most golf courses you play, you're going to pick up a cheap birdie here and there, there are none.

Media Center, Thursday:

Rand Jerris: We are now joined by Nick Dougherty with a round of 2-under par 68 in the first round. Maybe you could start us with some comments about your round and the playing conditions this morning.

Nick Dougherty: Yeah, I think the course is—I hate saying it—easy.

Dougherty's second round will be seven over par.

Flash, Friday:

Q. Can you talk about how you had to scramble on No. 2?

Tiger Woods: I tugged my tee shot left and rough snagged it coming out and the hay snagged it again. I hit a pretty good bunker shot I thought, got below the hole and made the putt, one of the very few putts where I could be aggressive. I think I had probably three putts today that I could be aggressive with and I made two of them, the rest I had to kind of feed it down there.

Flash, Friday:

Q. No. 2 wasn't a fun hole for you; are there any there where you were having any fun at all?

Tiger Woods: It's so different than any other tournament we ever play in. Good shots are not going to be totally rewarded, but you're going to have good shots, bad shots are going to be penalized, and you know that and that's the way it should be, but you have to understand how to keep the ball in play, keep it below the hole if you can and have aggressive putts and I didn't do that today. Every putt seemed to be left to right, I had these feeders, I never had a putt where I felt like I could give it a pretty good rap.

Flash, Friday:

Aaron Baddeley: Like we were talking on No. 5, to get the ball like within ten, fifteen feet, you had like a three-by-three-foot landing area to land in.

Flash, Friday:

Q. How tough is a sub-par round today?

Brandt Snedeker: I don't see how you could do it. It would be considered one of the

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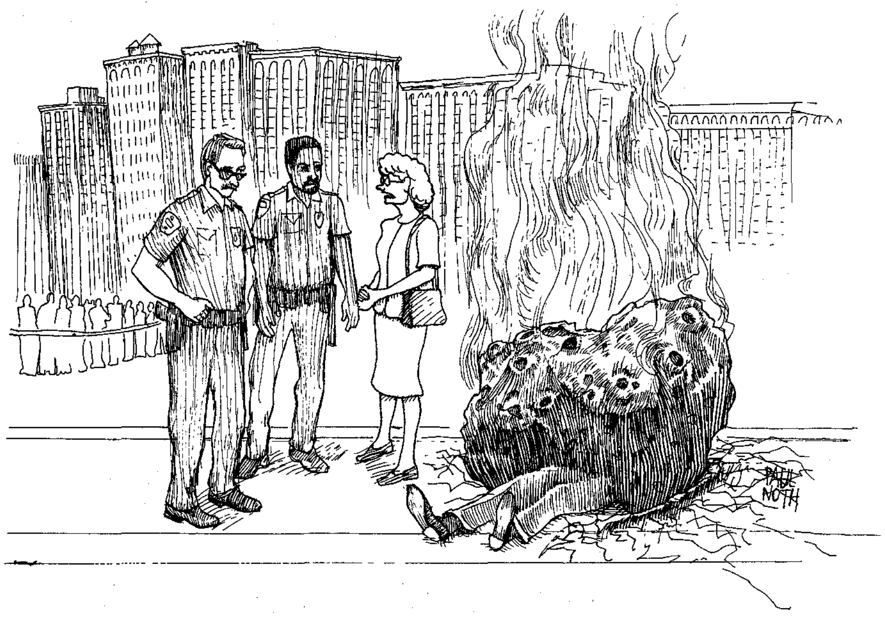


"I begged him to get help."

best rounds of golf of the year to shoot under par. The wind is blowing so hard on some of these holes, it's virtually impossible to hit a lot of fairways. The rough is as nasty as it can be, and the greens are as firm and fast as anywhere I've ever seen. You would really have to have an unbelievably good round of ball striking and an unbelievably good round of putting to even consider breaking par out there today.

Fifteen minutes later, Paul Casey comes in in 66.

Media Center, Friday:

Q. When was the last tournament you won? . . . I know it's been a while. I don't mean to bring up a sore subject.

Bubba Watson: That's all right. I'm not very good. [Laughter]

Flash, Saturday:

Q. Your putts were close all day; frustrating?

Tiger Woods: I'd be miffed with myself if I hit bad putts, but I hit good ones, so just the way it goes. If you look back on those putts on twelve and thirteen, filled have just carried a little more pace; they would have been in, because they only roll, what, six, eight inches past the hole. If they would having a little harder, they would have been good.

Flash, Saturday:

Q: On six, there was a photographer or someone bothering you.

Bubba Watson: The media is always in your way, you know. [Laughter]

The storied rivalry between Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson seems more intense among their fans than between the players. The Mickelson people and the Woods people come near to being as incurably divided as Republicans and Democrats. Now Mickelson, with a wrist inflamed since he came to Oakmont for an early practice round, has missed the cut and departed, ruing the liquid fertilizer and the thatched lies of a course so "dangerous" that you could "end your career on one shot." His absence leaves his fans in a vacuum that they are not about to fill with Tiger Woods. They need a substitutional hero. As it happens, the two likeliest possibilities are leading the tournament, and they tee off together in the final pairing, Round 3. They are two of the longest hitters in the game. One of them plays left-handed, as Mickelson does, and the other looks like him. The first is Bubba Watson.

If a par 4 measures not a lot under 400 yards, Bubba can drive the green. His 460cc Grafalloy driver has a pink shaft. Its head is the size of a softball. He is six feet three and weighs a hundred and eighty pounds, and his own head is strikingly spherical. His fine black hair, projecting straight all over and mowed to six-tenths of an inch, appears to have the soft texture of an electric shoe polisher. His home town is Bagdad, Florida—population fifteen hundred, in the panhandle—where he grew up a good ol' child. His father, a onetime Green Beret who used to play golf but rarely made it into the eighties, is the only golf coach that Bubba has ever had. "He's right-handed, so we used, like, a mirror. He says I quit listening to him about age nine. You know how parents get sometimes." His father told him to hit the ball as hard as he could, adding, "We'll figure out the rest after that." When a journalist asks Bubba how difficult it is for him to forgo his passion for his driver and, in order to play it smart, wimp down to "6-irons off par-4 tees," Bubba recalls the second-round fourteenth—"358 straight downwind." He said to Teddy Scott, his caddie, "I think I should hit the driver—I can get there." Handing Bubba his 6-iron, the caddie said, "I know you can get there, but this is what we're hitting."

Bubba Watson: He's got a little baby, so he's got to eat, too. [Laughter] It's hard because it's more fun for me to hit the driver. When I'm home, that's all I hit no matter if the hole is long, short, it doesn't matter, that's all I'm hitting off tees. You look, not like a man when you're at your home course hitting iron off the tee.

In the days leading up to events on the tour, Bubba Watson and Tiger Woods frequently play practice rounds together, getting to the golf course at first light.

Media Center, Friday:

Q. Tiger has marvelled in the past about how far you hit the ball. When you play those practice rounds with him, how far do you blast it past him, and what's his reaction?

Bubba Watson: I blast by him every time. [Laughter] He always talks about his wins, and I always talk about how far I hit it. [Laughter] The man wants to hit it past everybody. Doesn't matter—you can practice and win tournaments, but you can't practice it and hit it farther, that's what I always tell him, but he doesn't listen very much. He always talks about majors and all that stuff. [Laughter]

Flash, Friday:

Q. Bubba said that he bothers you asking you a lot of questions during the pre-dawn practice rounds; what is it that makes you want to keep answering him?

Tiger Woods: Bubba is a great kid, I enjoy playing with him and he's got so much talent and if he would just understand how to play strategically, he's got all the power, you can't teach power but you can teach strategics and he has the ability to tone it back and play different shots and if you watch him play he does play shots and he's from the old school that way, he likes to shape shots and that's a missing art nowadays.

Tiger, who is thirty-one, is three years older than the great kid. Here at the U.S. Open, to loosen up in the morning and prepare for each day's round of golf, Bubba plays basketball. Since one-on-one would be risky and in any case too strenuous, he plays Horse with Angie Watson, his wife. On one of their first dates—"the first time we hung out"—they played Around the World, a ten-shot contest from various angles on the periphery. You give up the ball when you miss. Angie hit ten straight jumpers, and Bubba never got the ball. Angie played in the W.N.B.A., for the Charlotte Sting.

Media Center, Friday:

Q. Some people might say that being a small-town guy, there's a risk of suddenly becoming wide eyed in the final two days. Why will that not happen, do you think, being wide-eyed, realizing your a small town boy and here you are?

Bubba Watson: I don't know what's going to happen. I'm hopefully going to wake up in the morning and go from there. But I don't know what's going to happen. I might shoot 65-65 or 85-85. Hopefully my wife will still love me no matter what I do.

Second in the tournament by a single stroke, Bubba tees off on Saturday. If miracles could happen, he would replay the ninth. Off the green in two, he chunks a chip (a few feet nowhere), loses his cool, loses his marbles, steps swiftly to the ball, swings without preparation, hits it over the green, chips to fifteen feet, and two-putts for a triple. "One bad swing, and that's all it takes."

Bubba Watson's playing partner is Angel Cabrera, who is very good at avoiding one bad swing, and goes on to the final round four strokes off the lead. In winning his first major, Cabrera will also become the first U.S. Open champion to speak through an interpreter. He is from Córdoba, four hundred miles northwest of Buenos Aires. Nine months older than Mickelson, three inches shorter, and ten pounds heavier, Cabrera nevertheless resembles Mickelson to an uncanny extent—in his build, in his jowly bright-eyed demeanor, and, above all, in his lumbering gait. Almost as if he is imitating Mickelson, Cabrera clomps along in a way that variously suggests a large Pleistocene mammal or a blue-collar worker on his way to fix a faucet. Cabrera is Mickelson through an interpreter, Mickelson translated into Spanish. So what if he swings right-handed? A gift to all Philistines, he's their pro-tem man.

Cabrera became a caddie at the age of ten, full time. From the primary grades, he had to drop out of school forever in order to help put food on his family's table. Caddies in Córdoba could play the course on Mondays. He was not taught; he just played—developing what has been called "a homespun swing." He became a pro when he was twenty, with the same domestic purpose he had when he became a caddie.

He smokes, yes—"*Sí, fumo*"—*cigarrillos pequeñitos*, the length of golf tees. For his manner of walking he is known in Córdoba as El Pato, the duck. His balding brush cut is graying at the temples. In the second round, on his last hole, he sank a birdie putt that caused Phil Mickelson and eighteen others to pack and go home, missing the cut. As Cabrera left the course, forty-odd journalists were doing a flash interview with Tiger Woods, a crowd that melted to fewer than twenty when Cabrera followed Tiger to do his own.

And now, through the final round, Cabrera is becoming visibly and increasingly nervous, for the simple reason that he thinks he has a chance to win. He smokes more. He smokes in several senses. He birdies the eighth. He birdies the eleventh. His drive on the long, downhill twelfth rolls out to 390 yards. After some of these shots, he claps a hand over his ball cap in amazed disbelief. After his drive on the eighteenth hole, all he needs is a 9-iron. He comes in in 69. The winner's check is $1,260,000. Defeating Tiger Woods and Jim Furyk, who are tied behind him, he is the only player in this U.S. Open to turn in two subpar rounds. His seventy-two-hole total is nonetheless five over par.

Flash:

Q. Where will the trophy go?

Angel Cabrera [in Spanish]: With me, in my bed, it's going to sleep with me. . . . It is very difficult to describe this moment. Probably tomorrow when I wake up with this trophy beside me in my bed, I will realize that I have won the U.S. Open.

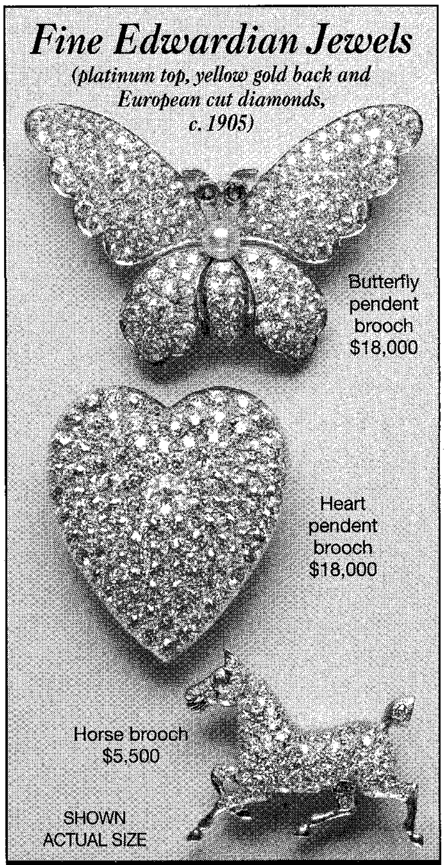
In the Media Center, he responds to some of the questions without waiting for the interpreter to tell him what was asked.

Q. If you're understanding me, why aren't you answering this in English? [Laughter]

Angel Cabrera [in Spanish]: I understand, but I'm not fluent enough, so I feel that I cannot be myself.

Q. You beat the best player in the world and the rest of the field, but you also beat a very, very difficult golf course . . .

Angel Cabrera [in Spanish, interrupting]: Yes, definitely I was able to beat the best player and the best players here, but I wasn't able to beat the golf course. The golf course beat me. ♦



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SHOUTS & MURMURS

BEST SEATS

BY BRUCE WAGNER

A friend called to tell me that Prince was giving one of his chicly innovative, exclusive concerts on Friday night, at a venue yet to be disclosed. The cost: three hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars per ticket. Having recently come into an inheritance that dwarfed that amount, I mulled it over for about two seconds before deciding to splurge on this prestigious event, the likes of which hundreds of V.I.P.s have experienced in the past six months. I wanted to be one of them.

The performance began at two in the morning and took place in a bungalow at the Beverly Hills Hotel. It was amazing. I was so close to Prince that I was injured during the six-and-a-half-hour set. A few lucky ones, who paid an additional hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars—twelve of us, to be exact, including Simon Cowell, the body of Christopher Isherwood, Shia LaBeouf, Michael Moore, the lissome Emma Watson, and the physicist Stephen Hawking—milled about after the show. We were all gregarious and high from the experience. As it turns out, Mr. Hawking is as sparkly and svelte as Nicole Richie, and extremely droll. It took a while before I was able to understand what he was mischievously typing into his sophisticated little voice machine: "Women, not girls, rule my world." We all laughed and laughed. Then Prince reappeared and played for fourteen more hours. Fortunately, I had brought along a bottle of Adderall, prescribed for my A.D.D., and I courteously offered my stash to the group. But, perhaps because Prince's boundless energy seemed genuinely contagious, everyone declined. (I should have asked Mr. Moore how much the pills would have set me back had I bought them in Cuba.)

After Prince stopped playing, the two of us had brunch together. I was sitting so close to the diminutive legend that, as he ate, flecks of his omelette fell into my mouth. The privilege of this intimate meal cost an additional eighty-five thousand dollars, but it was worth every penny.

For a few weeks afterward, I was depressed. Going out to dinner with friends—for, say, two hours of convivial overfamiliarity and banal, rehashed conversation—seemed like idiocy, and the emptiness was only exacerbated when my friends jumped for the check. Even my normal morning ritual held no joy. Usually, one assistant comes into the bedroom with a pot of Indonesian coffee (the brew, six hundred dollars a pound and DHL'd from England, where it is rumored to be a favorite of the Royal Family, is sifted from the dung of wild civets) while a second factotum presents me with a freshly bound volume containing selections from every blog and Twitter and Facebook entry that has mentioned my name in the past twenty-four hours—hundreds of pages, with "BRUCE WAGNER" in convenient boldface—but even this lost its allure. It was then that I had an epiphany: there was only one thing that would bring me out of my doldrums.

Not long ago, I received a call from a friend who works as a private chef in Sun Valley, who had cooked for Rupert Murdoch and his wife during Herbert Allen's annual moguls conference. He said that the opportunity to lunch with Warren Buffett, the Oracle of Omaha, was regularly auctioned off on eBay, and the money was given to charity. At first, I thought he was kidding, but a bit of online research confirmed that it was true. People had bid as much as six hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the honor. There was a catch: Mr. Buffett never talked business over lunch. That didn't concern me. The cachet of breaking bread with the greatest capitalist the world has ever known was, as they say, priceless.

Within a week, I had made a successful bid—$1.15 million—and lunch was set at Ruth's Chris Steak House in Beverly Hills. (Mr. Buffett had to be in California on business.) Needless to say, I felt like sharing the experience. Word had quickly got around that I was part of the select group that had attended the Prince "bungalow concert," and this had the effect of lending me enormous credibility; when my people contacted Shia LaBeouf's representatives to extend him a luncheon invitation, they jumped right on the phone.

So there we were, at a round table, so to speak, with Mr. Buffett: me, Shia, David Milch, the disembodied cartoon voice of Antonio Banderas, the cable star Kyra Sedgwick, Jim Lehrer, Daniel Radcliffe, and the newly minted singing sensation Hannah Montana (I've forgotten her real name). I learned that everything they say about Mr. Buffett is true: he does not travel with an entourage, he is witty and concise, and he does not put on airs. He was wise, cordial, and au courant. The thing he said that I liked most (Hannah Montana seemed to like it, too, but I wasn't sure that she completely understood) was a quote from Mark Twain: "History doesn't repeat itself—but it rhymes."

At the end of the lunch, I asked Mr. Buffett how much longer he would be in town. Warren (he insisted I call him that) said that although he'd originally planned to leave that evening, his grandson wanted to go to a concert by "a fellow named Prince." When I asked what the venue was, he got a twinkle in his eye and just said, "Undisclosed."

Later, I learned that the concert had taken place at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. A new technology had been developed by Johnson & Johnson—Berkshire Hathaway already has a fairly large stake in the company—that allowed people to be so close to Prince that, for seven hours, the singer was technically inside their bodies. In other words, the audience "became" the superstar singer-songwriter on a multicellular, organic level. Warren's grandson later reported that he had been able to "think Prince's thoughts." The price of each ticket was fifteen million dollars.

Well, my heart sank. To cheer myself up, I bought a $59,750 Hästens horsehair bed, though I assure you I haven't slept well in days. I don't know if I ever will. ♦

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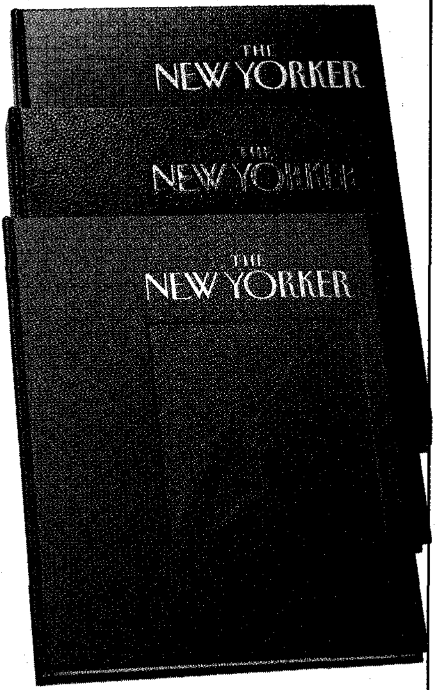

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ANNALS OF TECHNOLOGY

DAMN SPAM

The losing war on junk e-mail.

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

In the spring of 1978, an energetic marketing man named Gary Thuerk wanted to let people in the technology world know that his company, the Digital Equipment Corporation, was about to introduce a powerful new computer system. DEC operated out of an old wool mill in Maynard, Massachusetts, and was well known on the East Coast, but Thuerk hoped to reach the technological community in California as well. He decided that the best way to do it was through the network of government and university computers then known as the Arpanet. Only a few thousand people used it regularly, but their names were conveniently printed in a single directory. After selecting six hundred West Coast addresses, Thuerk realized that he would never have time to call each one of them, or even to send out hundreds of individual messages. Then another idea occurred to him: what if he simply used the network to dispatch a single e-mail to *all* of them? "We invite you to come see the 2020 and hear about the DECSystem-20 family," the message read. As historic lines go, it didn't have quite the ring of "One small step for a man," yet Gary Thuerk's impact cannot be disputed. When he pushed the send button, he became the father of spam.

The reaction was immediate and almost completely hostile. "This was a flagrant violation of the Arpanet," one recipient wrote. Another noted that "advertising of particular products" should be strongly discouraged on the network. The system administrator promised to respond at once, and Thuerk was harshly reprimanded. Nevertheless, his company sold more than twenty of the computer systems, for a million dollars apiece. Thuerk saw no harm in his actions; he and others viewed the network as an emerging symbol of intellectual freedom. Even if unsolicited e-mail became a nuisance, a greater danger would be posed by placing limits on how this powerful new tool could be deployed. "The amount of harm done by any of the cited 'unfair' things the net has been used for is clearly very small," the Internet pioneer Richard Stallman wrote a few days after the DEC e-mail. Stallman opposed any action that would interfere with the aggressive openness that came to define the Web. And he still does. In his message about the DEC spam, Stallman pointed out—three decades before the appearance of Craigslist and Monster.com—that the network provided a unique opportunity to advertise jobs and an entirely new way to sell products. He went even further: "Would a dating service on the net be 'frowned upon' . . . ? I hope not. But even if it is, don't let that stop you from notifying me via net mail if you start one."

I have no idea whether anyone on the Arpanet tried to help Stallman find a date, but thousands of people have tried to help me. In the past few weeks, I have received several e-mails from the Dating Adult Friend line, and several dozen from a site called Adult Friend Finder. In addition, there were fourteen messages from someone calling himself Damian Dominques, who offered, repeatedly, to help me meet "delicious babes." I also received fairly unambiguous invitations for personal interaction from people named Antonia, Heather, Helen, Joyce, Olivia, Kelly, Sally, Sophie, and Sue, among dozens of others.

Wading through dating-service spam is a minor inconvenience compared to dealing with advertisements for products designed to help those dates succeed. I received three hundred and seventeen pieces of mail offering, through surgical, mechanical, and, above all, pharmaceutical means, to help "fatten" my "love muscle," as one of them put it. There were also several hundred solicitations for low- and no-interest car loans, automatic mortgage

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More than a hundred billion unwanted messages clog computer networks every day.

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approvals, sleeping pills, dubious heart medicines, diet aids, gastric bypass surgery, contact lenses, air-conditioning systems, watches, online casinos, laptops, high-definition television sets, bootleg software, and jobs that promised to let me work at home, do practically nothing, and earn millions of dollars. In all, last month my three principal e-mail addresses pulled in 4,321 messages that went straight into various spam folders. Another hundred or so made it to my in-box.

As the Web evolves into an increasingly essential part of American life, the sheer volume of spam grows exponentially every year, and so, it would appear, do the sophisticated methods used to send it. Nearly two million e-mails are dispatched every second, a hundred and seventy-one billion messages a day. Most of those messages have something to sell. Even the most foolish and unsavory advertisements can earn money—in part because the economic bar for success is so low. If somebody wants to send you junk mail the old-fashioned way, through the United States Postal Service, he has to pay for it; the more he sends, the greater the expense. With electronic junk mail, the opposite is true: it costs a pittance to send a million messages—or even a billion—and recipients almost always spend more than the sender. (Assume that someone can unleash a hundred million spams from a twenty-dollar broadband account each month; at those rates, a penny would pay for fifty thousand pieces of mail.)

Spam's growth has been metastatic, both in raw numbers and as a percentage of all mail. In 2001, spam accounted for about five per cent of the traffic on the Internet; by 2004, that figure had risen to more than seventy per cent. This year, in some regions, it has edged above ninety per cent—more than a hundred billion unsolicited messages clogging the arterial passages of the world's computer networks every day. The flow of spam is often seasonal. It slows in the spring, and then, in the month that technology specialists call "black September"—when hundreds of thousands of students return to college, many armed with new computers and access to fast Internet connections—the levels rise sharply.

Attempts to police the Internet have met with only partial success. On May 23rd, the federal government indicted Robert Alan Soloway on thirty-five counts, including mail fraud, wire fraud, money laundering, and aggravated identity theft. (He has pleaded not guilty.) In its indictment, the government contended that Soloway had sent out tens of millions of illegal e-mails in the past four years, seeking to drum up business for his Internet marketing firm. Federal agents described Soloway, a twenty-seven-year-old Seattle "entrepreneur," as the nation's spam king, and said that the arrest would have a major effect on the flow of unwanted e-mail. "Taking Soloway off the streets is terrific," I was told not long ago by Matt Sergeant, the chief anti-spam technologist at MessageLabs, one of the leaders in the growing industry dedicated to ridding the Internet of junk mail. "But turn on your computer tomorrow and see if you notice a difference. These guys are sophisticated and they are everywhere. Each time we think we have them, they respond with something new."

Spam seemed to vanish after the DEC incident of 1978. Throughout the nineteen-eighties, the Internet remained largely the province of academics, few of whom had any desire to see their network turned into a platform for virtual garage sales and dating services. But, driven by the rise of eBay, in the nineties, and other commercial applications, the Internet soon became more powerful than the people who had created it. The World Wide Web was conceived in an environment where trust was assumed and identity never doubted, and that openness has been among its greatest assets and its biggest flaws. The Internet permits individuals to act without supervision, permission, or control. If you have the e-mail address, you can write directly to whomever you want; protocols and rules that have governed written communication for hundreds of years no longer apply. That absolute freedom makes cyberspace an ideal place to agitate for democracy in China, sell seventeenth-century carpets, or blog about early music. Blending these new freedoms with any sense of order or discipline has proved nearly impossible, however, and so has virtually every attempt to contain the explosion of spam.

All e-mail includes simple information about where it is going and who sent it. The mail is sorted along the way by routers—electronic devices that connect networks—which have no way of verifying that you are who you say you are. Most solutions for controlling spam would alter that practice, placing significant limits on the free exchange of information. Even many of those who fear that weak security is destroying the Internet are reluctant to support measures that appear to limit free speech. The Electronic Frontier Foundation's chairman, Brad Templeton, has written frequently on the history of spam. As his group put it in a recent white paper, "One person's spam is another's critical political update."

Under those circumstances, the emergence of spam in its modern form—mass, anonymous, and often fraudulent—was inevitable. The onslaught apparently began on April 12, 1994, when two lawyers—Laurence Canter and his wife, Martha Siegel—bombarded the Internet with e-mail offering their services to immigrants seeking to remain permanently in the United States. ("Green Card Lottery 1994 May Be The Last One! THE DEADLINE HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED.") Millions of messages went out within a few hours. The two were denounced, and their Internet-service provider immediately revoked their accounts. The sanctions didn't much matter. Canter and Siegel got what they wanted—more than a thousand clients—and were soon back online, planning their next mailing. The two later claimed that they made a hundred thousand dollars from the e-mail campaign—a compelling demonstration of the peculiar economics of the Internet. The couple embraced their notoriety and went on to write a book, "How to Make a Fortune on the Information Superhighway." It didn't take long for thousands of others to try.

STARS & STRIPES GIRLS
SALE

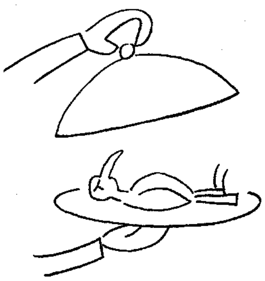
"I can't decide—do I go for the prettiest doll or the one with the most compelling backstory?"

The original Spam (a contraction of "spiced ham") is made by the Hormel Corporation, which sent enough cans of it overseas during the Second World War to feed every G.I. In a celebrated 1970 Monty Python skit, a diner tries repeatedly and in vain to order a dish, any dish, without Spam. She is drowned out by a group of Vikings in horned helmets, who chant the word dozens of times—"Spam! Spam! Spam! Spam! Spam! Spam! Spam! Spam!"—eliminating any possibility of rational thought. The word was rapidly adopted by computer programmers as a verb meaning to flood a chat room or a bulletin board with so much data that it crashes.

Definitions vary, as does the line between spam and annoying but legal ads. (Like pornography, however, which has profited greatly from the ease and privacy of electronic junk mail, you know it when you see it.) Few companies could function without attempting to stop spam from invading their employees' in-boxes. The costs are not always easy to assess, but several studies have found that in the United States more than ten billion dollars is spent each year trying to contain spam. The success rate of such anti-spam efforts usually exceeds ninety-five per cent, but spam behaves on the Internet in much the same way that viruses do when they infect humans: it might take a million of them to attack an immune system before one gets through, but one is enough. The same is true of e-mail. The more spam that is blocked, the greater the volume spammers will need to send in order to make money. "If you used to have to send fifty thousand pieces of spam to get a response, now you have to send a million," John Scarrow, the general manager of anti-spam technologies at Microsoft, told me. (Spammers usually need to send a million e-mails to get fifteen positive responses; for the average direct-mail campaign, the response rate is three thousand per million.) "Spammers just shrug it off and send a million." That amount of e-mail can overwhelm servers and waste time, particularly for those who check their mail several times a day. (It takes at least five seconds to recognize and delete an e-mail. If a billion spam messages elude detection every day—which means that ninety-nine per cent do not—that adds up to a hundred and fifty-nine years of collective time lost hitting the delete button every day.) Scarrow told me that of the four billion e-mails processed by Hotmail every day, they deliver only six hundred million. The rest are spam.

Hotmail is one of the world's largest providers of e-mail service, with two hundred and eighty-five million registered accounts in more than two hundred countries. "We filter them all, and that takes huge amounts of computer processing power and Internet bandwidth, and it requires us to work constantly to keep the numbers from getting worse," Scarrow said. "We do this to minimize the impact on our customers, but it's a hell of a job." Microsoft maintains a hundred and thirty thousand special Hotmail accounts specifically for the purpose of trapping and examining suspicious e-mail. Many function as "honeypots"—decoys that spammers think have been infected but will actually record the source's Internet address. Honeypots have no filters. "It is the raw Internet, 24/7," Scarrow said. "They will try absolutely everything. And it is often pretty raw."

In 2003, the federal government passed the Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act, which is widely referred to as the CAN-SPAM Act. The law requires people who send e-mail advertisements to offer recipients the opportunity to decline future messages. It also mandates prison terms for violators. Early in 2004, motivated in part by the excitement of the new legislation—but also by the technology achievements of researchers and engineers—Bill Gates told a group of people attending the World Economic Forum, in Davos, Switzerland, "Two years from now, spam will be solved." The comment received a lot of attention, and, for a while at least, Gates's optimism seemed justified: the deluge seemed to slow. The new law established clear guidelines about what was legal, and several companies made aggressive attempts to catch and prosecute the most significant criminals. It began to cost spammers money to evade the law, and that made them wary—for a while. The act was not meant to stop spam—simply to regulate it. Even so, it has been widely seen as a disappointment. The law permits spammers to continue sending e-mails unless specifically asked to stop, and it allows them largely to dictate the steps necessary to avoid the messages.



In the year after the law was enacted, less than seven per cent of spam complied with the requirements of the legislation, according to MX Logic, an Internet-security firm. Last year, compliance with the law never even reached one per cent. Corporate technology administrators watched, often dumbfounded, as spam volumes jumped noticeably in October, and then again in November. Postini, a prominent Internet-security firm, stopped twenty-two billion messages from reaching the mailboxes of its thirty-six thousand clients in November alone. The company now intercepts twelve spam messages for every e-mail delivered. During 2006, the year by which Gates predicted that spam would be "solved," it more than doubled in volume compared with the previous year.

We now know why. Even as Congress was passing the CAN-SPAM Act, spammers were changing their tactics. Until 2003, bulk e-mail had largely followed the approach taken by conventional mass-market mail, offering products like printing supplies and magazine subscriptions. It wasn't hard to find out who the e-mail came from, and almost nobody lied about his identity. Viruses were hardly unknown, but "it used to be all kiddies writing scripts in their bedrooms," Matt Sergeant, of MessageLabs, told me. "In 2003, spammers started paying people to write viruses to take control of home computers. The easy days were over." Viruses are actually tiny software programs that exploit weaknesses in networks or computer operating systems like Windows. They find a way to burrow into a computer's hard drive. That summer, a virus called Sobig infected millions of computers throughout the world. In a single day, MessageLabs intercepted a million copies and AOL stopped more than twenty-five million.

Sobig was the first commercial virus created by spammers designed specifically to infect machines, embed its code, and then turn those machines into networks that could send millions of e-mails. Because the e-mails were sent by innocent people who never knew that their computers were infected, the criminals were almost impossible to trace. Suddenly, spam had created an industry: a netherworld of hijacked PCs (called zombies or slaves), linked together in rogue robot networks (or botnets) controlled by underground bot herders, who operate from anywhere in the world. These networks can unleash millions of pieces of mail in a few minutes; when the botnets disband, the herders regroup and seize tens of thousands of other computers. Even the cheapest machines now have enough processing power to churn randomly through millions of address combinations until they stumble on a few that are correct.

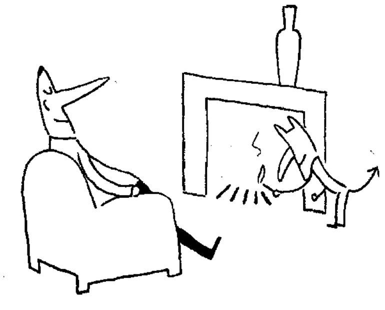
The increase in spam levels—nearly tenfold in the past three years—is almost solely a result of botnets. Messages routinely carried viruses, many of which were designed to evade traditional filters. It's not hard to do: Many people use common, easily guessed passwords to protect their wireless networks—and a surprising number don't use passwords at all. Clicking on the wrong link at a Web address can also permit malicious software to install itself on a computer and force it to manufacture spam. This is called a "drive-by download." Once a computer virus invades, it will seek out any address book, sending copies of itself to every e-mail address it can find. Spammers today almost never use their own computers or Internet connections. It is rarely necessary, since they can seize control remotely from computers all around the world. "By the end of last year, spammers had taken over enough PCs that they could really do whatever they wanted with them," Sergeant said. "Half of the time, they are doing it on your computer and you wouldn't even have a clue."

Thomas Bayes was an eighteenth-century British clergyman and avid mathematician who became interested in probability. At the time, people had just begun to focus on the risks and rewards associated with the new field of insurance and actuarial statistics; Bayes developed a theorem that helped determine the probabilities behind the statistics. Bayesian reasoning, it turns out, can also be used to gauge the likelihood that an e-mail message is spam. Almost all defenses against spam rely on filters, which inspect words, phrases, the history of mail exchanges between the sender and the recipient, Internet-protocol (I.P.) addresses—unique numbers that are supposed to identify every computer—and other aspects of e-mail. The filters employ a series of complicated statistical methods to determine whether the message seems like spam. If an e-mail contains the words "free," "Viagra," and "herbal," for example, then the filter is likely to conclude that the message is spam. Naturally, filters make mistakes, and legitimate mail can end up in spam folders. False positives can pose a bigger problem than spam itself. "The one thing people do not want to see is genuinely important e-mail that doesn't make it to their inbox," Keith Coleman, the product manager for Google's Gmail, told me. "When that happens with any regularity, they lose their faith in e-mail completely."

A spammer's job is to confound the filters. The spellings "V1agra" or "Viagr@" mean nothing to a machine, but almost any human reader gets the point. In 2002, the programmer Paul Graham wrote an essay called "A Plan for Spam," which became an intellectual manifesto for the thousands of researchers trying to find a way to clean up the Internet. "I think it's possible to stop spam, and that content-based filters are the way to do it," he wrote. "The Achilles' heel of the spammers is their message. They can circumvent any other barrier you set up. But they have to deliver their message, whatever it is. There is no way they can get around that."

Graham compared every character—dashes, apostrophes, numbers, symbols—in thousands of genuine e-mails with those in thousands of pieces of spam. He was able to train his software to use the context of a message to guess how likely it was that an e-mail containing certain words in relation to each other was spam. The words "republic" and "madam" seem innocent enough, but when they appear together in an e-mail they are often from a Nigerian huckster who has addressed his e-mail "Dear Sir or Madam." Mail like that is invariably spam.

As filters become more sophisticated, spam becomes more elusive. There are millions of ways to write a word using punctuation, numbers, and other symbols. One mathematically minded blogger who looked into it found that there are 600,426,974,379,824,381,952 ways to spell Viagra. "If I thought that I could keep up current rates of spam filtering, I would consider this problem solved," Graham wrote. "But it doesn't mean much to be able to filter out most present-day spam, because spam evolves." Indeed, most anti-spam techniques so far have been like pesticides that do nothing other than create a more resistant strain of bugs.



It has never been easy to devise a way to sort the mail we want from the mail we don't want. Some software attempts to analyze the reputation of the sender. Has its domain sent spam before? Is its I.P. address legitimate? The most common approach is to create a fingerprint for spam, using software that assigns numeric values to different words and patterns it sees in an e-mail. These methods worked for a while, and then the arms race kicked in. The battle has moved this way for years: spam eludes filters, engineers improve the software. Each parry has been met by a new thrust. There are now blacklists, gray lists, and white lists, which permit people to choose whom they want to receive mail from, rather than whose mail to delete.

Stopping spam this way is a bit like trying to stop the rain by catching every drop before it hits the ground. The Internet itself is always available to help an aspiring spammer. There are many sites, and they are neither concealed nor subtle. There are spam supermarkets, online forums, often hosted in China or Russia, with names like specialham.com and spamforum.biz. When one is shut down, another pops up instantly. One site, send-safe.com, advertises an entire range of software packages. There is, for instance, "send-safe honeypot hunter," which is designed to help people determine whether a fake computer is on the other end of their message. The most basic program is called "send-safe mailer," software that promises to "make it impossible for anyone to trace the e-mail back to your ISP. . . . This gives you a safe haven in which to send your mail." The program, which you can buy on the Internet after a free trial, costs about seventy dollars. (One Russian Web site sells a kit called Webattacker, which contains scripts that simplify the task of infecting computers. It can be downloaded for about twenty dollars.) "You can get into the business without being technical at all," Brad Taylor, the spam czar at Google, told me. "You buy your spamming program and your spamming network. You obtain a list of mailing addresses. Anyone can do this in an hour. Then you put them all together and set up a Web site or go to a service provider. You can buy a server for a few hundred dollars and spam from that. Usually, the provider will shut you down quickly and you will be blacklisted. But then you move on to the next." Among the systems that have been infected by networks of remote computers in the past two years were computers at the weapons division of the United States Naval Air Warfare Center and many machines operated by the Department of Defense.

Spam is one of globalization's true success stories. Servers can operate from anywhere, and spam gangs sell lists of "fresh proxies" (newly infected PCs), offer "bullet-proof hosting" (spam service Web sites, often based in China), and advise each other on new spam techniques and on which networks are "spam-friendly" (those which will host spammers in exchange for the spammers' paying for high-priced services they don't need). These days, many of the world's most prodigious and talented spammers are hidden in Eastern Europe and Russia, where, despite increasingly vigorous efforts, the F.B.I. and other international law-enforcement agencies have little genuine authority. Half the time, nobody even knows their real names. Spamhaus, an organization that tracks spammers and protects networks, keeps a list of the world's biggest spam operators, and many of the best of them go by obvious pseudonyms, like the Ukrainian spammer who calls himself, variously, Alex Blood, Alexander Mosh, AlekseyB, and Alex Polyakov. For a while, people thought that his actual name might have been Polyakov and that he was in Moscow, where they hunted him aggressively. But the name seemed familiar, and one day somebody remembered why: Alex Polyakov was the name of a Soviet operative in "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy."

Last year, spammers began to take advantage of the fact that computers can't see, and buried their messages in images. Most filters look for words and phrases or Internet address information. A picture contains so much more data that it is hard for the computer to find the message embedded in all the noise. Humans who click on the message have no trouble seeing it, though. Image spam consumes far more bandwidth than written messages, and that means it will devour even more space on computer servers throughout the world, costing more money and wasting more time. But spammers aren't stopping there. They are learning to send out polymorphic spam, thousands of variations of the same message, which makes each message unique and therefore hard to categorize.

In May, death-threat spam began to appear. The message comes from a "hit man" hired to kill the recipient. "I have been hired to assassinate you," the mail typically begins. "I do not know why they want you dead, but you are now being watched." Any user scared or gullible enough to respond will be asked to wire money to save his life. The amount varies.

When I asked Brad Taylor why he had gone into this line of work, he said, "I remember my first spam. I don't remember what they were selling. It was 1994, I think, and I was so annoyed that I found out who that person's Internet provider was and reported him. I began spending the first hour of every day tracking these people down. And I felt so good about doing that. But soon it got to the point where I was getting twenty of these e-mails a day. Then thirty. At one point, I just gave up.

"But I wanted to fix the problem and return to the bliss that existed before spam," he said. "Often the fight is fun, like a game. But last year there were some low points. We started getting these image spams, and the spammer would adapt to anything we did. He would write software that cut the image into little pieces that reassembled by the time you opened your mail. When we figured out how to deal with that, he started making text that waved around and curved in odd ways. So we figured that out. Then he started with random images." Taylor laughed. "This went on for a while. But, finally, he just gave up. And that's our hope. It's kind of like war. One side eventually gets tired. And we just can't let it be us." ♦

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

AN UNSOLVED KILLING

What does the firing of a U.S. Attorney have to do with a murder case?

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

Tom Wales was not supposed to be home on the night of October 11, 2001. Wales, an Assistant United States Attorney in Seattle, had planned to have dinner and spend the evening with his girlfriend, Marlis DeJongh, a court reporter who lived downtown. But that afternoon Wales called DeJongh and said that he had projects he needed to work on at home. In the evening, after leaving his office, near the federal courthouse, he returned to his Craftsman-style, wood-frame house in a quiet neighborhood known as Queen Anne.

Wales was forty-nine years old and had been a federal prosecutor for eighteen years. When he worked late, which was often, he would tell his family and friends, "I'm here at my post, serving my sovereign." The phrase was partly a joke, a bit of feigned grandiosity to justify a tendency toward excessive meticulousness: Wales did things slowly. He also had idealistic notions about his work. He took satisfaction in mustering the resources of the federal government to take on criminals, especially those with white collars who abused their privileged status.

On the night of October 11th, Wales arrived home after 7 P.M., gave his twenty-year-old cat, Sam, her nightly arthritis medication, and prepared to install some drywall in a stairwell on the second floor. At about ten o'clock, carrying a glass of wine, he went to the basement office that he had been sharing with his ex-wife, Elizabeth. Tom and Elizabeth had met as high-school students at Milton Academy, outside Boston, and married when Tom was an undergraduate at Harvard. They had a son and a daughter, who at the time were both in Britain, attending graduate school, and they had divorced, amicably, in 2000. (Elizabeth had come out as a lesbian, and the marriage was an inevitable casualty.) Under the terms of the divorce, Tom kept the house, though Elizabeth, a literary agent, ran her business from the basement during the day. Tom used a computer there at night, usually to send e-mails to his children and to DeJongh. That night, he had also planned to work on a fund-raising letter for Washington CeaseFire, the leading gun-control advocacy group in the state, of which he was president.

The Waleses had renovated the house during the years that they lived there, and in the basement they had installed a picture window, which provided a view of the small back yard. At 10:24 P.M., Wales sent an e-mail to DeJongh from the computer, which was on a desk in front of the window. About fifteen minutes later, someone shot him three or four times through the window from the back yard. (Investigators won't divulge the exact number of shots.) Mary Aylward, an elderly woman who lived next door, heard the shots and called 911. An off-duty police officer, who happened to be nearby, arrived within minutes. Wales appeared to be conscious, but he couldn't speak, and was taken by ambulance to the trauma center at the Harborview Medical Center, in Seattle.

Friends and colleagues gathered at the hospital, among them Jerry Diskin, the acting U.S. Attorney, who also lived in Queen Anne and had heard the shots; Gil Kerlikowske, Seattle's chief of police; Bob Westinghouse, another Assistant U.S. Attorney, and his wife, Kay; and Eric Redman, one of Wales's closest friends, who had once been married to Elizabeth's sister. They were told that Wales was in surgery. Just before dawn, a surgeon emerged from the operating room to say that Wales had died. "The doctor obviously had put clean scrubs on to come out and talk to us," Redman recalled. "She didn't come out with blood all over her. When I was standing there talking to her, it was hard to look her in the eye. I looked down and saw that the bottom seams of her trousers were covered with blood."

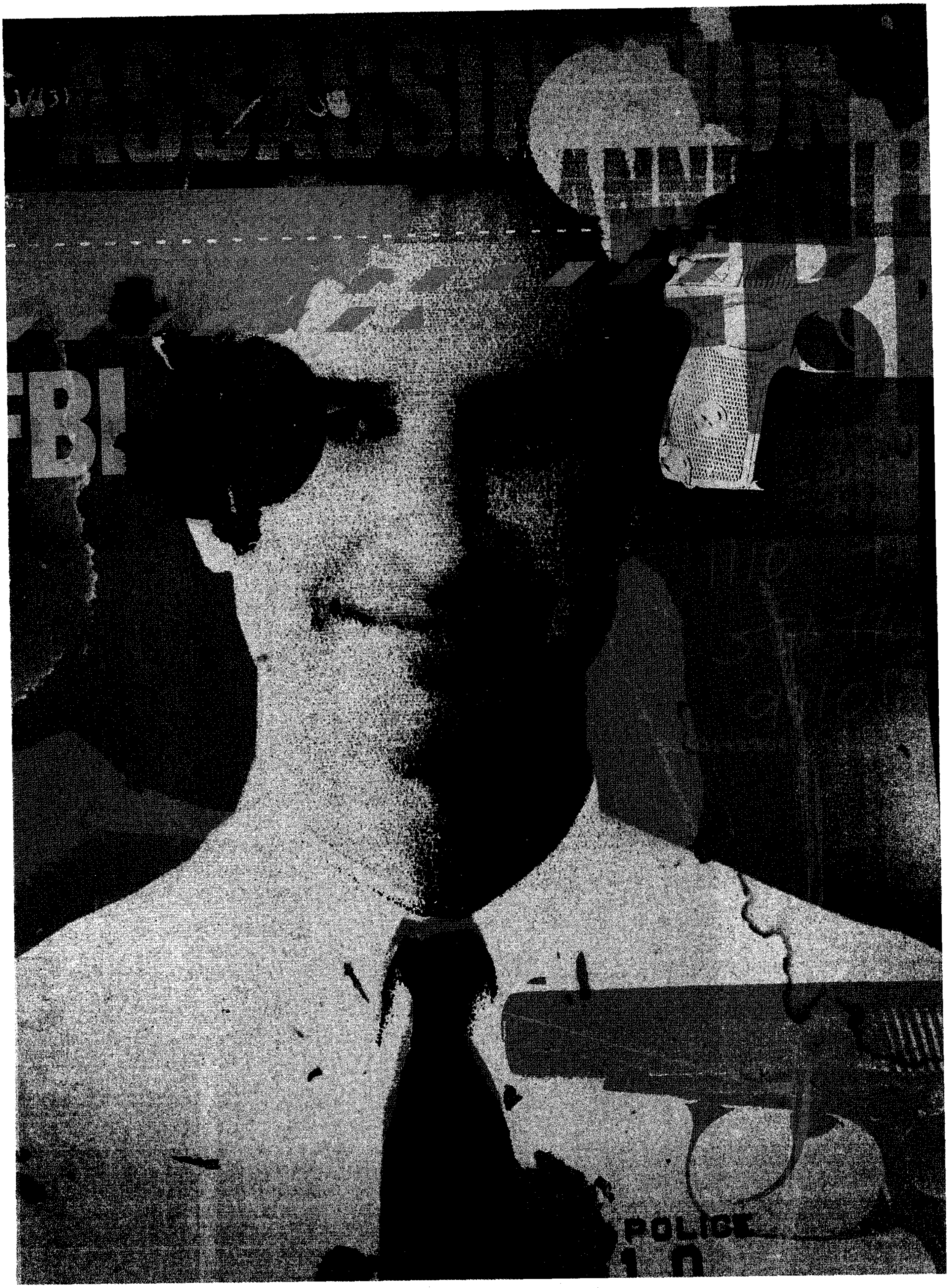
United States Attorneys are political appointees, who serve at the pleasure of the President. They establish the priorities for each of the nation's ninety-four judicial districts and announce significant indictments and arrests; many are well known in their communities. Assistant U.S. Attorneys are more like civil servants; they perform the day-to-day work on important investigations and their public speaking is typically limited to the courtroom. They often leave after a few years for better-paying jobs at law firms. Tom Wales was an exception to this pattern.

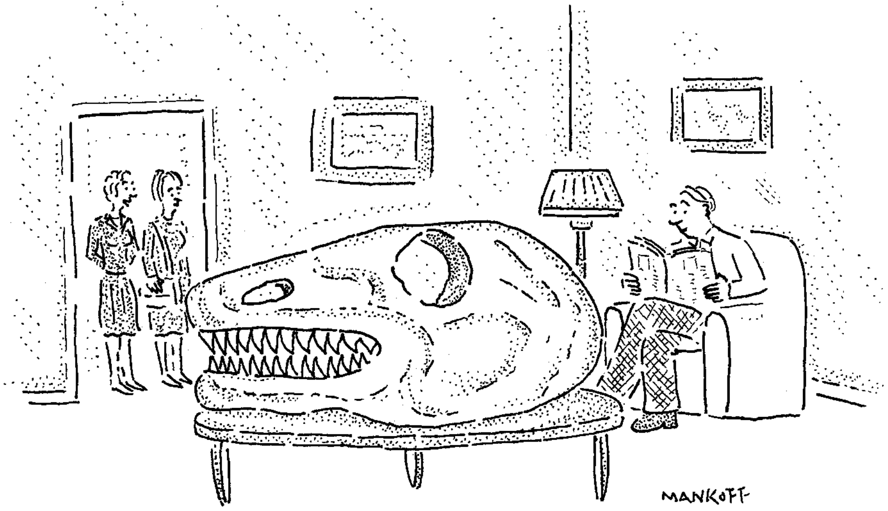
After graduating from law school, at Hofstra University, Wales took a job with the New York law firm of Sullivan & Cromwell. "But Tom always wanted to do something for society, and that kind of life was never for him," Elizabeth Wales told me. In 1983, he was hired as a federal prosecutor in Seattle. Tom and Elizabeth, a tall, lean, and athletic couple, took to life in the Northwest, going on long hikes in the Olympic Mountains and the Cascades. Tom became a neighborhood activist, fighting overdevelopment and the placement of cell-phone towers, and serving for a couple of years on the Seattle Planning Commission.

Tom was fond of local wines and liked to cook—he was especially proud of his fruitcake. But he could also be ornery and competitive. At weekly lunches of the two dozen or so federal prosecutors in Seattle, Wales was a combative presence. "Tom would always eat the same thing, a peanut-butter-and-ketchup sandwich," Lis Wiehl, who was an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Seattle in the nineteen-nineties, recalled. "And everyone would sit

ILLUSTRATION BY ALEX WILLIAMSON, PHOTO COURTESY WALES FOUNDATION

Tom Wales, an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Seattle who became a gun-control activist, was killed in his home in 2001.


FBI
POLICE



"William dabbles in paleontology."

around and discuss their cases. Tom and Bob Westinghouse had all the big white-collar cases, and they'd just sit there and scream at each other the whole time. They were good friends, but that was how they related."

In 1995, a student at the high school that the Waleses' son attended brought a gun to school and shot and injured two classmates. Tom was horrified. "The idea so outraged him—the idea that a kid could be shot at school—that he decided to get involved," Elizabeth Wales told me. "It was a good issue for him, because people were passionate about it. People don't like to handle those kinds of things, but Tom wasn't afraid." Wales soon became president of Washington CeaseFire, and in 1997 he led a campaign in favor of a statewide ballot referendum on a proposal to require gun owners to use trigger locks. As an Assistant U.S. Attorney, Wales was prohibited from running for office and from taking sides in partisan elections, but the law permitted him to campaign on issues to be decided by referendum. Among his colleagues in the U.S. Attorney's Office, Wales's political activism was considered unusual, but it was also generally accepted.

The proposal brought out the full might of the pro-gun lobby, which spent four million dollars—primarily on television advertisements and direct-mail appeals—and voters rejected the measure, seventy-one to twenty-nine per cent. Nevertheless, the gun initiative established Wales as a public figure in Washington State, and, a few months before he died, he was invited to give the commencement address at a Seattle community college. Wales delivered a manifesto in defense of his liberal politics. "John Lennon said, before he was shot and killed outside the Dakota Apartments in New York, 'Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans,'" Wales told the students. "Be engaged; be involved in what goes on around you. Be present in your own life. Find something you believe in passionately and get into it. Get outraged. Take a stand.

"For me, among other things, it's gun control," Wales went on. He cited an incident that had occurred two years earlier, in which a gunman shot and killed three people in a Seattle shipyard. "The next day, the papers reported that, within minutes of the shooting, the Seattle School District had been able to lock down every school within a two-mile radius of the shootings," Wales said. "My first thought was Well, good for the school district for doing a fine job protecting our kids. But wait a minute. Is this Kosovo, Bosnia, Beirut, Rwanda—that we have to lock down our schools to protect our children?" He added, "I've spent the past ten years building Washington CeaseFire into an organization that takes on the N.R.A. at every turn." He went on to denounce the death penalty (which had recently been imposed on Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber), and to express alarm about global warming, which was not yet a mainstream concern.

"He had so much fun with that speech," Steve Kidder, Wales's college roommate, said. "He told us how, when he left the podium, two mothers of graduates came up to him during the procession out of the hall. One told him it was the worst speech she had ever heard, and the other told him it was the best speech she had ever heard. I'm not sure which reaction he enjoyed more." Trevor Neilson, the vice-president of Washington CeaseFire at the time, said, "Being a federal prosecutor, he came across as anything but the weak liberal that the N.R.A. likes to characterize as the typical supporter of gun control. We were talking very actively about his running for Seattle City Council. There is no question that Tom would have gone on to be mayor, governor, or senator, and that was likely to happen soon."

Paradoxically, Wales's murder was in some ways a boon for Washington CeaseFire. A month after he was killed, the group held a benefit in his honor, which was attended by more than five hundred people, including many prominent Democratic politicians in the state, and raised five hundred thousand dollars. The featured speaker was the documentary filmmaker Rory Kennedy, who is the daughter of Robert F. Kennedy and the sister of Joseph P. Kennedy II, the former Massachusetts congressman, who had been Wales's roommate at Milton. Wales, who was the president of the student body and the captain of the football team at Milton, roomed with Kennedy the fall after his father was assassinated.

At the Justice Department, the reaction to Wales's murder was more muted. Neither John Ashcroft, then the Attorney General, nor any of his top deputies attended Wales's funeral. The highest-ranking official present was the director of the executive office of United States Attorneys, a mid-level official who coördinates administrative support for federal prosecutors. "The Justice Department was so disappointing," Gil Kerlikowske, the Seattle police chief, who shared Wales's commitment to gun control, said. "Here you have a cold-blooded murder of an A.U.S.A., and I could not imagine that the only person they sent out was this executive director."

The F.B.I. gave the investigation the code name SEPROM—short for "Seattle prosecutor murder"—but the bureau set the reward for tips leading to a prosecution in the case at twenty-five thousand dollars, which was widely regarded in Seattle as an insultingly small amount, and did not offer local investigators assistance from Washington, D.C. "We put a lot of agents on the Wales case from the beginning," Charles Mandigo, the special agent in charge of the bureau's Seattle office at the time, told me. "But we got no backfill from headquarters—that is, additional agents. In other major cases that headquarters really cared about, they'd say, 'You're not going to bleed resources, and you'll get all the backfill you need.' The feeling was that H.Q. was so preoccupied with 9/11 that they were neglecting the issue of whether it was fair to the office to have to put all its resources on the case without getting backfill."

Two weeks after the murder, the Senate confirmed a new U.S. Attorney for western Washington, John McKay. "When I got there, on October 30th, there was still yellow tape around Tom's office," McKay recalled. "It was still considered a crime scene. People still wept. From the prosecutors to the secretaries to the administrative staff, it was a traumatized place. It was not just that they lost somebody, but somebody they all knew and liked very much." McKay had met Wales several times in the company of other A.U.S.A.s, but knew him mainly by reputation. "Most A.U.S.A.s keep a much lower public profile than Tom did," he said. "However, he was fully entitled to do what he was doing, and he violated no Department of Justice policies." He added, "I personally would not be in full agreement with his organization"—Washington CeaseFire—"but I fully supported his right to participate and admired him for his community involvement."

McKay's family is sometimes described as a Pacific Northwest (and Republican) version of the Kennedy family. McKay's brother Mike, the oldest of twelve children, is a prominent Seattle lawyer who served as the U.S. Attorney for western Washington in the first Bush Administration. Several other siblings are active in law and politics. The McKays share bluff Irish good looks, fierce devotion to one another, and—by reputation, anyway—formidable tempers. John McKay, the fifth child, has a somewhat unconventional résumé for a U.S. Attorney. After graduating from college, at the University of Washington, and from law school, at Creighton University, in Omaha, he practiced law in Seattle until 1997, when he was named president of the Legal Services Corporation, a nonpartisan office within the federal government that funds programs that provide lawyers for poor people. He left that post to become the U.S. Attorney in Seattle.

"The Wales case was awkward for me from the start, because our office was recused from doing the actual investigation," McKay said. "I agreed with the decision to recuse. This is a potential death-penalty case. You couldn't have Tom's friends in the office making those kinds of decisions. And I thought at first it meant that I should have nothing at all to do with the investigation. Then, several months after I became U.S. Attorney, I had a brown-bag lunch with my staff, and I got my head handed to me by several senior A.U.S.A.s in very strong terms. They said the department was neglecting the investigation of Tom's death. They thought the prosecutor assigned from headquarters, who came out of the organized-crime unit, was not up to the job. I heard it all—not enough agents, the wrong prosecutor from Washington, the small reward. They were right to raise it with me.

"My mistake was that I assumed 'recusal' was 'recusal,'" McKay went on. "I had erred in assuming that I was completely recused from even asking questions about the allocation of resources. I assumed it would have the highest priority within the Department of Justice. I once worked at the F.B.I. for a year, and during that time an agent was killed in Las Vegas. They deploy like crazy when an agent is killed. Agents got off the airplane that night from D.C. to investigate. The director of the F.B.I. flew out. That was not the reaction we were getting from the Department of Justice after Tom Wales was killed. Over 2002, I decided that really it should be my job to advocate for appropriate resources to be devoted to the Wales case."

In 2002, at a meeting of U.S. Attorneys at the New York Hilton, McKay approached Larry Thompson, then the Deputy Attorney General, in a corridor and spoke to him about the case. As they were talking, Robert Mueller, the director of the F.B.I., appeared. "It was a little awkward," McKay recalled. "Bob jumped in to kind of defend the F.B.I. I said, 'Bob, we've got to have appropriate agent support for the Wales investigation, and we're not getting it.' He was fairly sharp with me, saying, 'I've done everything I

"Can you put some more sunscreen on my ankles?"

LATER IN LIFE

Summer heat, the first early morning
of it. How it lowers the pitch of the
cry—human—cast up
as two words by the worker street level
positioning the long beam on
the chain as he calls up to the one handling the pulley on
the seventh floor. One
call. They hear each other!
Perfectly! As the dry heat, the filled-out leaves thicken the surround, the warming
asphalt, & the lull in growth
occurs, & in it the single birdcries now and again
are placed, &
all makes a round from which sound is sturdied-up without dissipation or dilation,
bamboo-crisp, &
up it goes up like a thing
tossed without warp of weight or evidence of
overcome
gravity, as if space were thinned by summer now to a non-interference. Up it goes, the
cry, all the
way up, audible and unchanging, so the man need
not even raise his voice to be heard,
the dry warm air free to let it pass without
loss of
any of itself along
its way…
I step out and suddenly notice this: summer arrives, has arrived, is arriving. Birds grow
less than leaves although they cheep, dip, arc. A call
across the tall fence from an invisible neighbor to his child is heard
right down to the secret mood in it the child
also hears. One hears in the silence that follows the great
desire for approval
and love

possibly can.' I said, 'I know that's your intention, but it hasn't worked out that way.' Larry was kind of an observer to the whole thing. Bob said he would look into it." (Mueller declined to comment.)

Not long after the meeting, John Ashcroft visited Seattle to give a speech at a Coast Guard base, but he didn't meet with McKay's staff or mention the Wales case. "In Seattle, you always have a sense that you're an outpost, that people care more about things that happen on the East Coast," McKay told me. Some of his colleagues in the U.S. Attorney's Office had a different view of the Justice Department's actions. "These are savvy people," McKay said. "They looked at all these things—who attended the funeral, the low reward, the energy and resources in the investigation—and they concluded that Tom was not in favor because he was the president of Washington CeaseFire." (On the first anniversary of Wales's death, Larry Thompson came to Seattle to dedicate a conference room in the U.S. Attorney's Office to him.)

Meanwhile, Wales's friends began to talk about creating a memorial. "We were really concerned that he would be remembered only for his work on gun safety, and that was just one strand of his life," Eric Redman, his former brother-in-law, said. "So his family started a foundation dedicated to the idea he talked about in the commencement speech: civic engagement. And the idea was to start a program at the University of Washington to sponsor students who wanted to do public service." Norm Dicks, a longtime Democratic congressman from Bremerton, a town west of Seattle, agreed to try to procure federal funds for the program, and his staff suggested that Wales's friends invite the Justice Department to make a contribution. In 2004, the Thomas C. Wales Foundation asked John McKay's brother Mike, the former U.S. Attorney, who was still active in Republican politics, to make the request.

Mike McKay went to see Deborah Daniels, who was the Assistant Attorney General in charge of research and grants. "I told her that in my opinion Tom was probably killed in the line of duty," McKay recalled. "I said that they should help fund the project at the University of Washington. I don't remember exactly what she said, but I do remember it was off-putting." Redman recalls hearing McKay describe the meeting soon after

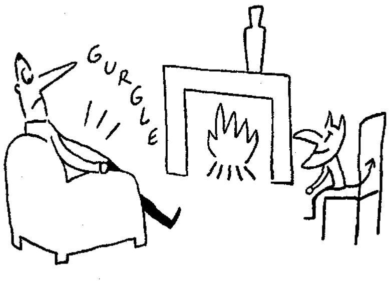
which summer holds aloft, all damp leached from it, like a thing floating out on a frail but
perfect twig end. Light seeming to darken in it yet
glow. *Please,* it says. But not with the eager need of
spring! Come what may, says summer. Smack in the middle I will stand and breathe. The
future is a superfluity I do not
taste, no, there is no numbering
here, it is a gorgeous swelling, no emotion, as in this love is no emotion, no, also no
memory—we have it all, now, & all
there ever was is
us, now, that man holding the beam by the right end and saying *go* on his
ground from
which the word and the
cantilevered metal
rise, there is no mistake, the right minute falls harmlessly, intimate, overcrowded,
without pro-
venance—perhaps bursting with nostalgia but
ripening so fast without growing at
all, & what
is the structure of freedom but this, & grace, & the politics of time—look south, look
north—yes—east west compile hope synthesize
exceed look look again hold fast attach speculate drift drift recognize forget—terrible
gush—gash—of
form of
outwardness, & it is your right to be so entertained, & if you are starting to
feel it is hunger this
gorgeousness, feel the heat fluctuate & say
my
name is day, of day, in day, I want nothing to
come back, not ever, & these words are mine, there is no angel to
wrestle, there is no inter-
mediary, there is something I must
tell you, you do not need existence, these words praise be they can for now be
said. That is summer. Hear them.

—*Jorie Graham*

he returned from Washington. "He said that Daniels said she was concerned that Tom had been so involved with gun control," Redman told me. (Daniels confirmed that she met with McKay but said that she does not remember their discussion and didn't know at the time that Wales worked on gun control.) Norm Dicks is still trying to get federal funds for a University of Washington program.

There were few clues at the scene of the crime. "This may be as close as you come to a perfect murder," an investigator on the case told me. "The only physical evidence left behind is the bullets and shell casings, nothing else. If you are an investigator in that circumstance, you have to look at motive." The question, then, was who wanted Tom Wales dead.

"This doesn't appear to be a random act," Robert Geeslin, the F.B.I. agent who has been in charge of the Wales investigation for the past year, says. "What motivation was behind it? You are going to look at professional life, social life, personal life." It was easy to determine that Wales remained friendly with his ex-wife, Elizabeth, who, in any event, was in Germany when he was shot. Since his separation, he had dated several women and, at the time of his death, was seeing Marlis DeJongh. "If we weren't together at night, Tom would e-mail me before he went to bed," DeJongh told me. "I printed out his e-mail first thing in the morning, and I thought my world was still bliss. Then I went to my office, where one of Tom's colleagues called and told me what happened. And I just screamed, by myself, for half an hour."



In July, three months before his death, Wales had been involved in an altercation at a parking garage near his office. According to Eric Redman, Wales drove his car into a limousine and got into a heated dispute with the limousine's driver, who had asked him for his insurance card and driver's license. Wales refused to provide these documents and drove from the garage in anger, hitting a truck on his way out. The limo driver called the police, and Wales was charged with a hit-and-run offense, though the charges were dropped a few weeks later. Neither Wales's romantic life nor the fender bender yielded promising leads in the murder investigation.

Wales's work on gun control apparently also failed to produce suspects. The fight over the statewide gun-control initiative had taken place four years before his death, and after that he had not been as involved in controversial issues. "It was kind of like proving a negative, ruling out all these possibilities," Charles Mandigo, the former F.B.I. special agent, said. "We pursued every possible lead. There were some girlfriends; those were all pursued. We reviewed all the cases that he was involved in, and no stone was left unturned. At the same time, we were pursuing what appeared to be a potentially very logical suspect."

Many A.U.S.A.s juggle dozens of cases, but Wales chose to take on just a few at a time. "Tom was extremely detail-oriented, and he would rewrite and rewrite, and his ultimate product was a work of perfection," Mandigo said. "From an agent's point of view, it would prove to be very frustrating. He didn't move forward as fast as people wanted. People would say, 'Hey, let's get this thing moving.' There was some frustration on agents' part if a case got assigned to Tom. 'I got a good prosecutor,' they'd say, 'but when is it going to move?'" For almost five years, Wales had been focussed on what he called "the helicopter case."

The Seattle area, the home of Boeing and many of its suppliers, has long attracted aviation buffs who try to turn their hobby into a business. The Vietnam War created one such opportunity. During the war, the workhorse helicopter for the United States military was the Bell UH-1 series, better known as the Huey, which came in various configurations, most of them capable of carrying about a dozen troops. After the war, many of the five thousand or so UH-1s that had been used in the war began to circulate on the secondhand market in the United States. Several local entrepreneurs decided to retrofit the surplus military models for civilian use. Such conversions were legal, as long as they were conducted in accordance with safety rules established by the Federal Aviation Administration.

"There wasn't much you could do commercially with a military model," Robert Chadwell, a Seattle defense attorney, told me. "You couldn't carry passengers, but you could with the civilian model. People started renovating the military models, in hopes of getting certification for civilian use. The issues could get very complicated. Could you rebuild a civilian model with military parts? How much of the original helicopter remained, and how much is rebuilt? How do you trace what happened to the original?" In the mid-nineties, Wales, working with his colleague Bob Westinghouse and a special agent from the F.A.A., began conducting an investigation of several helicopter conversions in the Seattle area. Chadwell represented one such operator, and had several contentious dealings with Wales. "Tom's idea was that the prosecution was all about safety, that these rebuilt helicopters were unsafe," Chadwell said. "But the investigation didn't go well for the government. My client had renovated his helicopter under the supervision of F.A.A. people, and really hadn't done anything wrong, safety-wise." After a four-year investigation, Chadwell's client's company pleaded guilty to an infraction in its record-keeping, a minor federal offense, and paid a small fine.

"I had known Tom for years, and we went at it pretty good in that case," Chadwell recalled. "I thought we had too good a relationship to let one case ruin it, so we had lunch to make sure there wasn't going to be any residual damage. We both shared an interest in red wine, so we started this little club—the Snooty Red-Wine Drinkers. The bottles had to cost less than twenty dollars and had to have a story. We would get together four to six people, and we met once a month at my firm."

By 2000, the investigation of the helicopter-conversion industry was winding down, with disappointing results for Wales and the U.S. Attorney's Office. Only one case remained. In 1997, investigators had searched the premises of a helicopter company owned by two local men, James Anderson and Kim Powell. The firm, called Intrex Helicopter, which was based at Powell's home, was reno-

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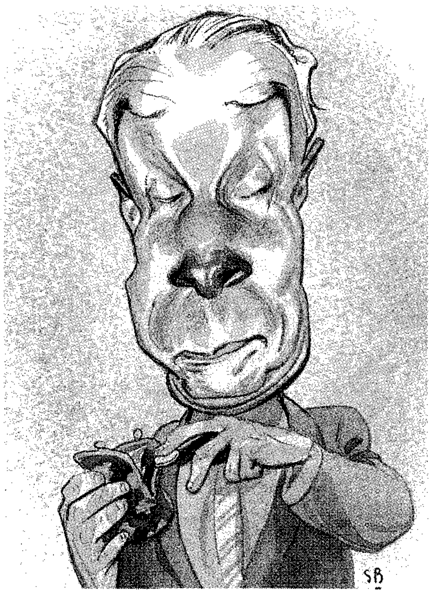
THE LOST POEMS OF JOE DiMAGGIO

Page after page, [the diaries] are DiMaggio's summaries of his daily activities from 1982 to 1993. . . . These notes lean heavily toward the humdrum: "Monday, December 12, 1983. Up at 7 a.m. Had breakfast in coffee shop at 8 a.m." At the bottom of many pages, he itemized his expenses for the day—$87 that Dec. 12, most of it for taxis.

—*The Times.*



Free stationery
In the hotel desk drawer
Beats buying paper.

Long line of children
Want to have my autograph.
That'll be ten bucks.

Searching through the couch
Something caught in the cushions
Lookee there, a dime.

Soap, pens, and washcloths
Many treasures in this room
Into my suitcase.

Who ever heard of
Two bucks for a cup of joe?
Highway robbery.

Cab to the airport
Driver took the long way there
Won't tip that bastard.

Tried to buy a drink
Quarter stuck in Coke machine
Goddam Motel Six.

—*Andy Borowitz*

STEVE BRODNER

vating a single helicopter for civilian use. Still, the stakes were substantial. "A UH-1 that has been reconstituted and for which a certificate to carry passengers has been issued would be a much more valuable helicopter than one that is flying on a certificate that has limited use, by hundreds of thousands of dollars," Westinghouse told me. (According to a court filing in a related civil case, Anderson and Powell believed that reconfiguring the helicopter would cost six hundred thousand dollars, and that Intrex could sell it for $1.2 million.)

In 2000, Wales obtained an eight-count indictment against Anderson and Powell on charges that included conspiracy to defraud the United States, mail fraud, and making false statements. The government accused the men of falsifying the helicopter's maintenance records, and submitting them to the F.A.A., as part of an effort to certify the helicopter for civilian use. But the case fell apart the following year, when the prosecution's expert witness from the F.A.A. decided that he no longer supported the government's theory. On June 29, 2001, in an act that would be humiliating for any prosecutor, Wales was forced to dismiss the indictment against Anderson and Powell. He said that the expert now believed there was "no inherent safety consideration" in the conversion of the helicopter. (The company pleaded guilty to a "petty offense" and paid a thousand-dollar fine.) "The F.A.A. chief witness went south on him," Elizabeth Wales says. "Tom felt awful about it." Marlis DeJongh recalled, "Tom said that in all his years of being a prosecutor it was the most frustrating case that he had ever worked on."

James Anderson, at the time that the case was dismissed, was a forty-year-old pilot for U.S. Airways, who lived alone in Beaux Arts, a Seattle suburb. On the night of Wales's murder, Westinghouse told investigators that he thought Anderson should be considered as a suspect. "We were concerned about a number of possibilities, one of which was that the murder might be related to our work, and one subject was the helicopter case," Westinghouse recalled. For the next several months, he received around-the-clock protection from U.S. marshals.

The F.B.I. has been investigating Anderson during the past six years, but no charges have been brought against him. (Anderson has never agreed to speak to investigators, and he declined to speak to me.) His attorney, Larry Setchell, said, "He is an innocent man and an honest man. Tom Wales was liked by everyone, including us. He did the right thing in our case by dismissing it. We were not mad at him."

On July 27, 2001, a month after the indictment was dismissed, Anderson filed a motion against the U.S. Attorney's Office, under an obscure law called the Hyde Amendment. The law, which was enacted in 1997, allows defendants who have been acquitted in federal court to sue the prosecutors in order to recoup their attorneys' fees and legal expenses, provided they can show that the case was "vexatious, frivolous or in bad faith." Anderson demanded a hundred and twenty-eight thousand dollars. On August 3, 2001, Wales's office filed a response to Anderson's lawsuit in federal district court. "We are convinced that he brings this motion in large part to discover the identity of additional witnesses that he imagines may have contributed to his indictment," the brief stated. "During the course of the investigation, the Government received information from at least two persons indicative of defendant Anderson's violent and retributive nature." Other government documents pertaining to the case remain under seal, and the identities of the persons referred to in the brief have not been made public. In any event, Anderson's motion was dismissed, and that ruling was upheld on appeal.

A month later, the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington took place, and, soon afterward, Wales again took a public stand for gun control. "Right after 9/11, the idea started to circulate that airline pilots should be allowed to carry weapons," Trevor Neilson, the former vice-president of Washington Cease-Fire, said. "Tom and I both thought it was a bad idea as a matter of public policy, but I thought it was wrong politically to come out against it at this time. The atmosphere was so strong in favor of doing anything to stop terrorism. But Tom disagreed. He thought arming pilots was a terrible idea, and he was going to say so publicly." On September 25th, Wales participated in a half-hour debate—which was broadcast several times in the Seattle area, on NorthWest Cable News—about whether airline pilots should be allowed to carry guns in the cockpit. Pilots, he said, "are not trained as Green Berets, they are not trained as law enforcement." He added, paraphrasing Duane Worth, the president of the Air Line Pilots Association, "It simply is not possible for an airline pilot to be Sky King and Wyatt Earp at the same time." Sixteen days later, Wales was dead.

John McKay's complaints about the investigation of Wales's death did produce some changes. The reward was raised to a million dollars; more F.B.I. agents were assigned to the case; and the original government lawyer on the case was eventually replaced by Steven D. Clymer, who had been a senior prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney's Office in Los Angeles. Best known for leading the successful federal prosecution of the Los Angeles police officers who beat Rodney King, Clymer had become a professor at Cornell Law School, and he coördinated the investigation from there.

Progress came slowly. Anderson remained the only suspect; in 2004, the Seattle *Times* reported that the F.B.I. had searched Anderson's home in Beaux Arts and removed twenty-seven boxes of possible evidence. Agents also searched two houses in the nearby city of Bellingham, one where Anderson used to live and one where he used to visit friends. In his former home, a bullet was removed from a wall, for analysis, and a bullet and a shell casing were taken from the friends' home. The *Times* quoted two neighbors of Anderson's in Bellingham who said that they had sometimes seen him fire a handgun into the ground from his back deck. (The *Times*, citing a policy of not naming criminal suspects, identified Anderson as a pilot who had been unsuccessfully prosecuted by Wales.)

Anderson's movements on the night of the murder were traced in detail. In the early evening, he and a friend had attended a showing of "2001: A Space Odyssey" at a movie theatre about ten minutes from Wales's home, in Queen Anne. After the murder, someone had made telephone calls from Anderson's home in Beaux Arts, about twenty minutes from Queen Anne. Would Anderson have been able to commit the murder between the time the movie ended and the time the phone calls began? "It would have been very tight, but not impossible," Charles Mandigo says.

Wales was killed by .380-calibre bullets that investigators quickly determined came from a Makarov semi-automatic handgun. These guns are widely available in the United States. Ballistics experts in the Washington State Crime Lab and at the F.B.I. noticed some unusual markings on the bullets indicating that they had been fired through a replacement gun barrel. "The Makarov uses corrosive gunpowder, and the barrels tend to wear out," an investigator in the case told me. The F.B.I. located the manufacturer of the replacement barrel and learned that approximately twenty-six hundred of the barrels had been sold. The agency then undertook a search, which is ongoing, to find each barrel. "We feel real confident that this particular barrel was the barrel that created the ballistics that we had," Robert Geeslin, the agent in charge of the investigation, said. (Investigators have been unable to establish that Anderson ever owned a Makarov, and found no connection between the bullets and the shell casing in Bellingham and the ballistic evidence in the Wales case.)

In Seattle, the case began to fade from public view. Only two local reporters, Steve Miletich and Mike Carter, of the Seattle *Times*, continued to write about it. Then, in late January of 2006, a typed letter, postmarked in Las Vegas, arrived at the F.B.I. field office in Seattle. "Re: Thomas C Wales," it began, and went on:

> OK, so I was broke and between jobs I got an anonymous call offering [the amount was redacted by the F.B.I.] to shoot the guy, so I drove to Seattle to do the job. I did not even know his name. Just got laid off from a job. Nice talking lady, I didn't know her name, she called me, talked to me by name, and asked if I needed some money. I agreed to pursue the matter, hell, I was going bankrupt. . . .
>
> I drove to the address, and then parked some distance away, north of downtown. I kind of camped out in the backyard of this house, and waited for the guy to settle in at his computer. Once he was there, I took careful aim. I shot two or possibly more times, and watched him collapse. I absurdly waited a few minutes and then left. I was sure he was dead.
>
> Retracing my steps, I dropped off the gun, found my money, and returned to Vegas. I feel bad about it, but I needed the money, and there were no witnesses.

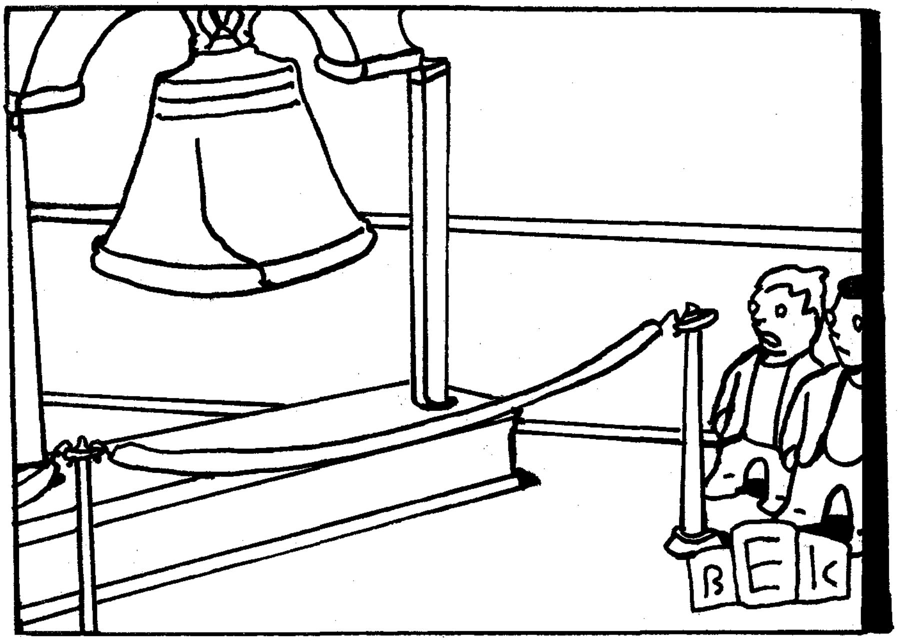
The envelope identified the sender as "Gidget" and gave as a return address the address of a business in Las Vegas with no apparent connection to the crime. Investigators believe that the letter may have been typed at a Kinko's, or somewhere similar. No traces of DNA were found on the letter or on the envelope.

"I think it's clear if you read the letter that the account described by the letter is fabricated," an investigator told me. "That said, whoever wrote that letter has a fairly sophisticated knowledge of the murder, probably better than ninety-nine point nine per cent of the people in Seattle. Wales lived north of downtown, he was in his basement, and the shooter shot him from the back yard. If you were just a casual follower of the story, you wouldn't know that. What's the motive in sending it? Why do it? He wants to throw the investigators off." An analysis of the letter by the Behavioral Sciences unit of the F.B.I. suggested that the author could be connected to the crime. The authorities also determined that Anderson was in Las Vegas at the time the letter was sent. ("He did not write the Las Vegas letter," Larry Setchell, Anderson's lawyer, told me.)

The case has taken a financial and emotional toll on Anderson, Setchell said. He no longer works for U.S. Airways, and Setchell declined to identify his current employer. "He is in retraining right now," Setchell said in June. "He is senior enough that he will be flying left chair"—that is, captain—"in a jumbo jet by the end of the summer."

By all accounts, John McKay was a successful U.S. Attorney in Seattle. He reorganized the office, increased the number of prosecutions, and improved morale. At the annual meetings of all U.S. Attorneys, McKay made a point of mentioning Wales. "Once a year, I stood up in front of my colleagues and talked about Tom Wales," McKay said. "He was murdered, and he was murdered in the line of duty. Most of my colleagues really welcomed that. I felt it was my job to do it." James Comey, who succeeded Thompson as Deputy Attorney General under Ashcroft, testified before Congress earlier this year that McKay "was excellent, in my experience. I had worked with him, as with the others, as a peer when I was U.S. Attorney in Manhattan and then as the Deputy Attorney General. So I had a very positive sense of John McKay." On September 22, 2006, McKay's office received a glowing evaluation from the Department of Justice. On December 7th, McKay, along with six other U.S. Attorneys, was fired.

The dismissals of the U.S. Attorneys soon became a national story, and Alberto Gonzales, the Attorney General, and other Administration officials have struggled to explain the reasons for the firings. Gonzales, in testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee in April, had little to say about McKay. To the



"I thought I was going to be much more blown away by the Liberty Bell."

best of his recollection, Gonzales said, McKay was fired because of his aggressive advocacy, in August, 2006, of an information-sharing system for federal prosecutors and for his complaints in a September 22, 2006, story in the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* about budgetary constraints in the Seattle office. (McKay ran a pilot program for the Law Enforcement Information Exchange, a Justice Department initiative that allows state and federal investigators to share information. The program has since been expanded.)

Gonzales's justifications for McKay's dismissal now seem unlikely to be true, because it has become clear that Justice Department officials were seeking to fire McKay before 2006. On March 2, 2005, Kyle Sampson, Gonzales's chief of staff, included McKay's name on a list of thirteen U.S. Attorneys to be fired, in an e-mail to Harriet Miers, the White House counsel. Sampson sent the e-mail four months after the 2004 elections, and after McKay decided not to bring charges against the Democratic Party, or people affiliated with it, in Washington State, in the wake of a narrow victory by Christine Gregoire, the Democratic candidate, in the governor's race. The contest, which was resolved after two recounts, prompted a lawsuit by the state Republican Party alleging widespread voting irregularities.

Several of the fired U.S. Attorneys had declined to prosecute Democrats in electoral disputes. Many Democrats have suggested that the prosecutors were dismissed by Gonzales and the Bush White House in retaliation for failing to advance Republican political objectives. But, in a deposition before the House Judiciary Committee in April, Sampson offered another explanation for McKay's dismissal. He said that McKay might have been fired because he had been too aggressive in his advocacy of the investigation of Tom Wales's murder. Sampson testified that McKay had approached Larry Thompson, then the Deputy Attorney General, and demanded that he "take some action" on the investigation, and that subsequently there had been tension between the two men. ("I don't remember being mad at John McKay," Thompson told me. "We always had to do balancing acts about how to allocate resources, but I never thought John acted inappropriately in the Wales case." McKay said, "Larry Thompson was extremely supportive of the Wales investigation, and of me personally. I'm unaware of there having been any criticism.")

Sampson's testimony caused a sensation in Seattle. "The idea that I was pushing too hard to investigate the assassination of a federal prosecutor—it's mind-numbing," McKay told reporters at the time. "If it's true, it's just immoral, and if it's false, then the idea that they would use the death of Tom Wales to cover up what they did is just unconscionable." After news of Sampson's statements broke, six Democratic congressmen from Washington State wrote to Glenn A. Fine, the inspector general of the Justice Department, who had begun an inquiry into the firings, asking that he investigate whether "Mr. McKay's removal may have been related to his zealous advocacy for increased Justice Department attention to the murder of Tom Wales."

The question of why McKay and the other U.S. Attorneys were fired remains unanswered. (Harriet Miers has been subpoenaed to answer questions on the subject before the House Judiciary Committee, but she has refused to appear, citing executive privilege. A court fight about the matter seems likely.) The notion that McKay was fired for failing to prosecute Democrats is plausible. But the passion that McKay brought to the Wales case may have played a part, too.

After the disclosure of a possible connection between Wales's murder and McKay's firing, Alberto Gonzales assured Wales's family that the Justice Department was committed to solving the killing. On June 27th, Gonzales, who was visiting Seattle, met with Elizabeth Wales; the Wales's daughter, Amy; and Eric Redman, and told them that the case remained a priority. According to Geeslin, more than ten investigators, from the F.B.I. and the Seattle police, are working on the case full time. "The level of commitment is very, very high," Geeslin said.

With the passage of time, though, a prosecution becomes more difficult. Mary Aylward, Wales's next-door neighbor and a witness to some of the events of October 11, 2001, died in a car accident last year. Jerry Diskin, the acting U.S. Attorney, who came to the hospital after Wales was shot, has also died. Solving a murder case more than six years after the crime occurred is rare.

The F.B.I. will not confirm that Anderson remains under scrutiny. However, last August the agency again searched houses in the Seattle area in which he had lived. In December, he was compelled by subpoena to spend eight hours giving handwriting samples to investigators. Around then, Anderson, who had married, for the second time, in 2005, separated from his wife, Andrea, and on January 12, 2007, he filed for divorce. In a court filing on March 7th, Andrea Anderson sought a restraining order against her husband. "The Court should be informed and take into account that [Anderson] has been and continues to be the chief murder suspect in the Thomas Wales investigation," she wrote in a sworn declaration. "I recently received a phone message March 2, 2007, from my husband stating he would create a website in my name, with my address, my phone number and pictures of me stating I am a whore because I stated to some acquaintances that he was the suspect. [Anderson] has a history of stalking his former wives, and myself when we were briefly separated. He is capable of anything, and I am fearful that if I do not do as he wishes . . . he may retaliate." Two days later, Anderson filed a reply, in which he denied his wife's charges. "I have not stalked my current wife and have not threatened her or tried to manipulate her," he stated. He added, "I am not going to comment on the 'FBI' material as it is not relevant to this case." (The judge overseeing the divorce ordered Anderson and his wife to stay away from each other.)

In June of this year, Andrea Anderson testified before the grand jury investigating the Wales murder, but investigators caution that her ex-husband may never be charged. Referring to Anderson, one law-enforcement official said, "If you investigate somebody for five years and you haven't closed the deal, you have to draw inferences from that, too." ♦

DEPT. OF ENTOMOLOGY

STUNG

Where have all the bees gone?

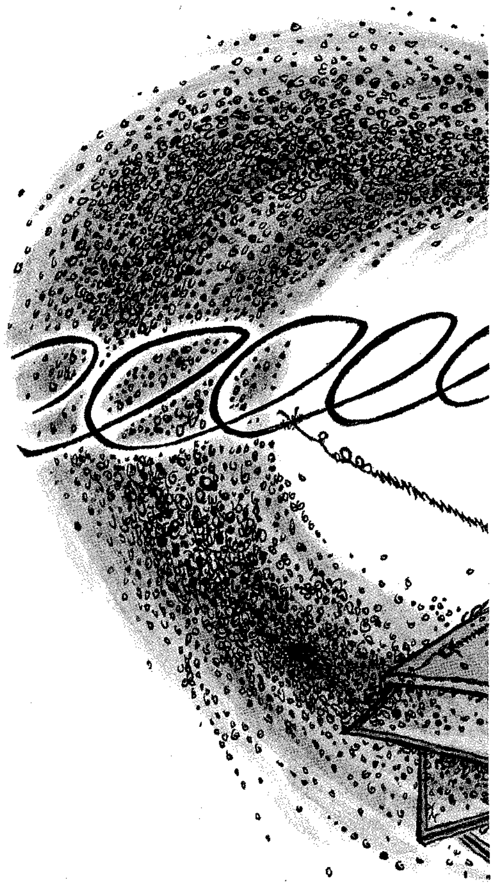
BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

Not long ago, I found myself sitting at the edge of a field with a bear and thirty or forty thousand very angry bees. The bear was there because of the bees. The bees were there because of me, and why I was there was a question I found myself unable to answer precisely.

In a roundabout sort of way, the encounter had been set in motion several months earlier, in late February, when the *Times* ran a story about a new ailment afflicting honeybees. It had been given a name—colony-collapse disorder—but no one had any idea what was causing it; beekeepers would open their hives only to discover that they were suddenly and mysteriously empty. According to the article, some keepers had lost seventy per cent of their colonies, and these losses, in turn, were likely to reduce the yields of crops ranging from kiwis to avocados. All this information struck me as disturbing, and therefore interesting. I thought that at some point I might want to write about it myself, and so I began to read up on bees.

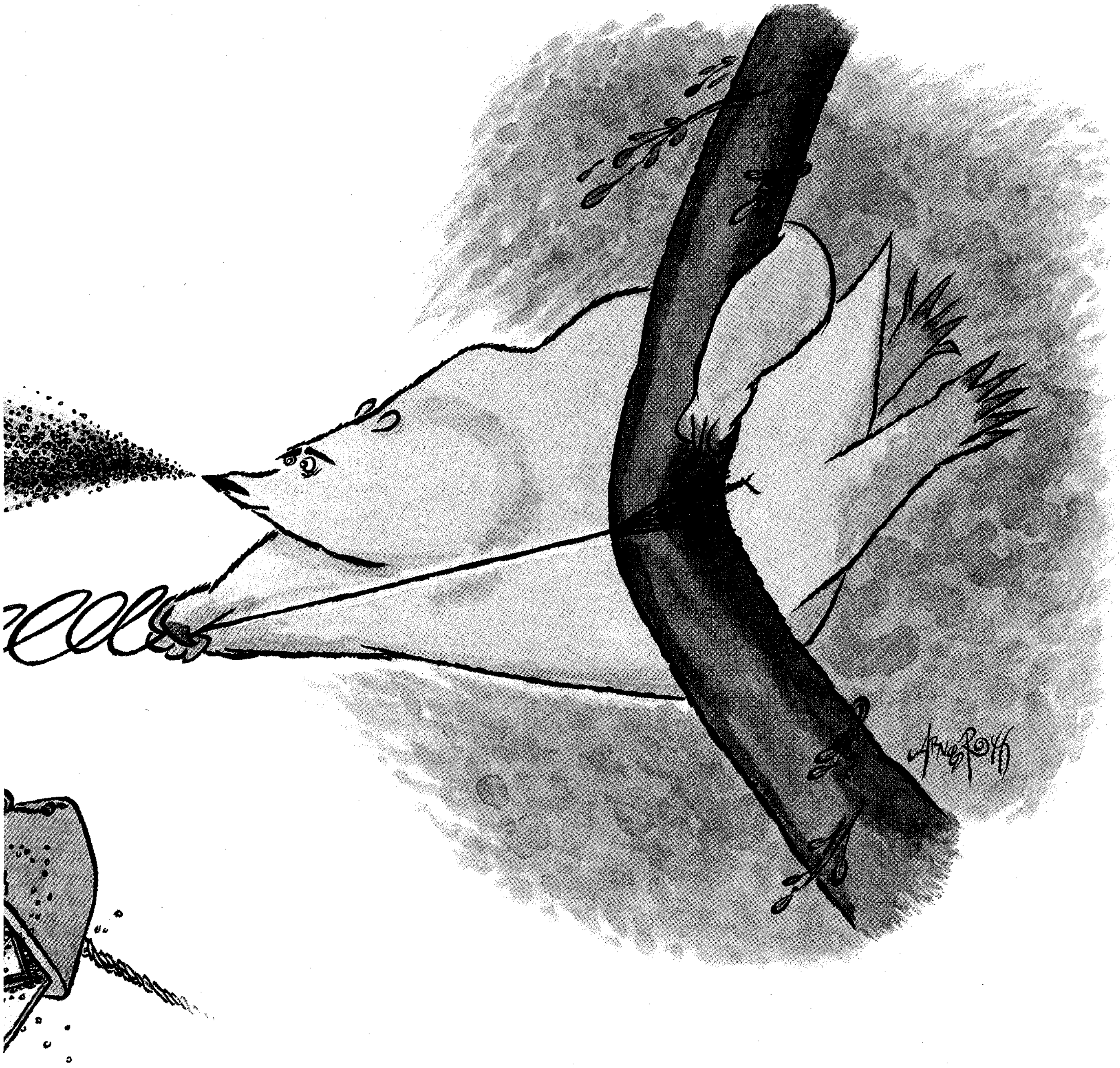
The literature of apiculture is vast and seductive; I learned one amazing thing after another. Honeybees are the only animals besides humans known to have a representational language: they convey to one another the location of food by dancing. When the queen lays an egg, she is able to choose its sex. Males, known as drones, perform no useful function except to mate. They are loutish and filthy, and the workers—sterile females—tolerate their presence for a few months a year, then systematically murder them. A single pound of clover honey represents the distilled nectar of some 8.7 million flowers. In a week, a productive hive can add seventy pounds of honey to its stores. Pretty soon, I had moved on to beekeeping manuals. I learned about different "races" of honeybees, each with its own "dialect" and disposition: Italians, which are golden and laid-back but can have trouble producing enough honey for winter; Carniolans, which are darker and hardier but prone to swarm; and Russians, which build up slowly but are the hardiest of all. I also learned about honeybee diseases: varroa mites, tiny parasites that attach themselves to bees and feed on their blood; tracheal mites, even tinier parasites, which attack bees' breathing tubes; American foulbrood, bacteria that turn bee larvae into stringy goo; and sac brood, a virus that leaves larvae swimming in bubbles of muck. Finally, and, I suppose, predictably, I began leafing through beekeeping catalogues, weighing the advantages of wooden frames versus plastic ones and full-body "English-style" bee suits versus simpler (and cheaper) veils. By the time I ordered my hive, the initial reason for having one—to learn about colony-collapse disorder—had dissipated. The disease (or whatever it was) hadn't turned up in the region where I live, which is western Massachusetts. But by that point I wasn't sure whether I was writing the story to keep bees or keeping bees to write the story.

Bees, which are descended from predatory wasps, turned from eating other insects to feeding on flowers some hundred million years ago. Not coincidentally, this was shortly after flowers first appeared. Since then, it's been one long evolutionary tango. Some bees have evolved to feed on the nectar of a single type of flower; for example, *Andrena florea*, a small European bee, relies exclusively on the delicate white blossoms of bryony plants. Conversely, some flowers, like the showy, fragrant orchid *Stanhopea embreei*, native to Ecuador, are pollinated only by a single species of bee, in this case *Eulaema bomboides*. Worldwide, nearly twenty thousand species of bees have been identified. Out of these, only perhaps two dozen have been successfully raised by humans, and only one—*Apis mellifera*, commonly known as the western honeybee—accounts for nearly all the bees maintained by beekeepers in Europe and North America.



No one knew whether colony-collapse disord

Apis mellifera is a floral generalist—the technical term is "polylectic"—meaning that it will feed on just about anything that is blooming. This trait makes honeybees essential to modern agriculture, which has itself evolved to depend on their services. In a five-hundred-acre apple orchard, for example, there simply aren't enough indigenous pollinators to produce a commercial crop: either the yield will be too low or the fruit will be small or stunted. (An apple has ten ovules, each of which can produce a seed;



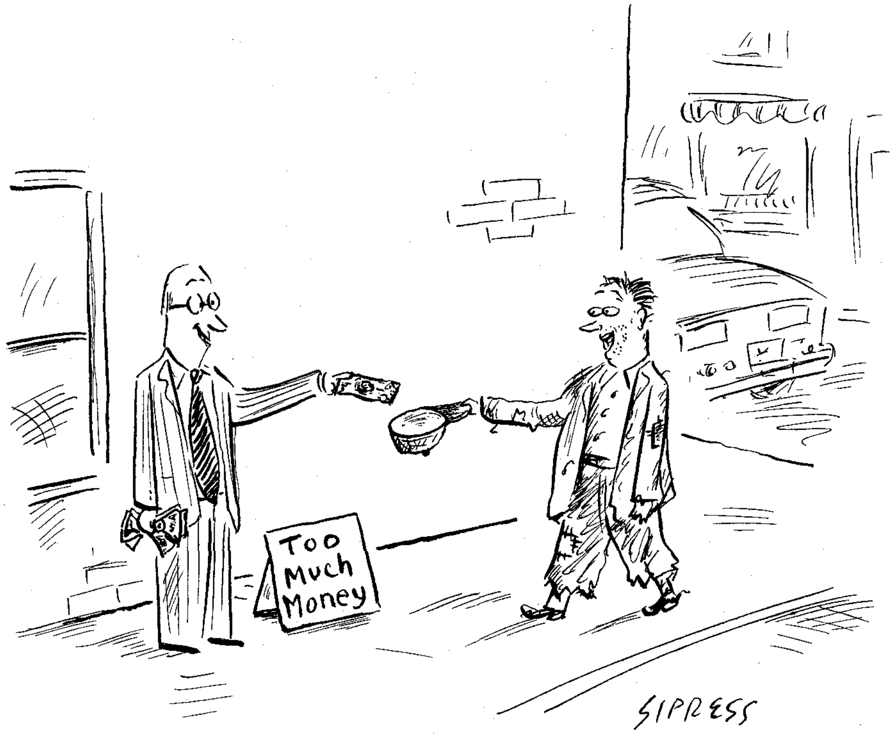
vas caused by disease, mites, toxins, or cell phones, but some keepers had reportedly lost seventy per cent of their bees.

ARNOLD ROTH

unless at least six are pollinated, the apple will be misshapen.) Apple growers, therefore, bring additional pollinators into their fields, and honeybees are the only ones that can be delivered in sufficient numbers. Other commercial crops that have come to rely on honeybees include blueberries, cranberries, cherries, cucumbers, watermelons, cantaloupes, and pumpkins.

Almonds, in particular, have extremely high pollination requirements—nearly all the flowers in an orchard must be cross-pollinated to produce a commercial crop—and so California's increasingly large (and lucrative) almond industry is almost entirely honeybee-dependent; it is estimated that to service the state's two billion dollars' worth of almonds next year will require nearly 1.5 million hives, or roughly two-thirds of all the colonies that existed in this country before colony-collapse disorder. (The price of renting a hive during the almond bloom, which starts in late February, rose from fifty-five dollars three years ago to a hundred and thirty-five dollars this year, and next year will likely reach a hundred and seventy dollars.) Five years from now, as more acreage goes into production, it is expected that almonds will require 2.1 million colonies, or nearly all the hives that are currently being kept, both by commercial beekeepers and by hobbyists.

Typically, commercial beekeepers ship their hives by flatbed truck; the hives are stacked on pallets, then unloaded with a forklift. The process is efficient—two men can easily move ten million bees into an orchard in a single day—and also profitable, or at least more profitable than selling honey to a world drenched in corn syrup. But it is hard on the bees. One keeper told me that every



time he loads up his hives he expects to lose ten per cent of his queens simply as a result of the jostling. Insecticides are also a problem; even assuming that farmers are careful to avoid spraying when bees are in their fields—something that beekeepers complain is not always the case—there are residues. Finally, the mass movement of honeybees spreads parasites and disease. (Truck 1.5 million hives in to pollinate almonds, and some sixty billion bees will be buzzing around the same trees.) The blood-sucking varroa mite was first reported here in 1987; within a few years, practically every managed colony in the United States had been infected. Since the early eighties, the number of hives has dropped by almost half. Wild honeybees, meanwhile, which were once common across the country, have nearly disappeared.

The first person to notice that there was something seriously wrong with his bees—or maybe just the first person to admit it—was David Hackenberg. Hackenberg, who is fifty-eight, is the owner, founder, and chief source of labor for Hackenberg Apiaries, which is based in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. He has a weathered face, grayish-brown eyes, and legs that seem to take up three-quarters of his body. He has been keeping honeybees for forty-five years.

"I started with one hive for a Vo-Ag project," Hackenberg told me not long ago. We were standing in a field somewhere near Lake Ontario, and a few yards away his oldest son, Davey, was collecting boxes of honey. There were so many bees in the air that it seemed to be vibrating. "I thought there was money in it. And there is. I keep putting it there." By the time Hackenberg graduated from high school, he had a hundred and fifty hives. That figure kept on growing until it reached nearly three thousand.

Last year, as usual, Hackenberg spent the spring ferrying his hives from Pennsylvania, where the bees pollinated apples, to Maine, where they worked lowbush blueberries, to upstate New York, where they fed on clover, and finally back to Pennsylvania, where they pollinated pumpkins. In October, Hackenberg and his son trucked the bees down to Florida for the winter. They left four hundred hives on a lot south of Tampa, so that the bees could feed off an invasive weed, Brazilian pepper, that was blooming nearby. In mid-November, they returned to pick up the hives, because the owner of the lot—a man who rents out carnival rides—needed it to store equipment. At that point, they did what they always do—put on their protective gear and lit a smoker. (For reasons that are not entirely clear, bees respond to the smell of burning wood or straw by becoming more docile, so beekeepers usually smoke hives before handling them.)

"After I smoked about five pallets, I realized I'm not smoking anything," Hackenberg recalled. "I started jerking covers off, and the hives are empty." Increasingly frantic, he began pulling the frames out of the hives. The more he saw, the weirder the situation looked. The frames all had honey in them, indicating that there had been plenty of food. They were filled with young larvae, or brood, meaning that the bees, usually fiercely maternal, had abandoned their young. There were no signs of moths or other pests that normally invade sick colonies. And Hackenberg couldn't find any dead bees.

"I got down on my hands and knees looking," he told me. "They weren't there. It's like somebody swept the boxes out. There were just no bees." Every time he came across a dead hive—what beekeepers refer to as a deadout—he flipped it on its side. By the time he had gone through the four hundred hives on the lot, only forty were still standing. Hackenberg had shipped twenty-nine hundred hives to Florida. When he finally went through all of them, he found that two thousand had been wiped out.

Hackenberg likes to talk. (Davey told me that one month this spring his father had a cell-phone bill for fifty-three hundred minutes.) He began calling around—to fellow-beekeepers, to officials at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to entomologists he knew at Penn State. He told them that some strange new ailment was killing his bees; they told him he had probably just screwed up. "Them mites'll get you," one of Hackenberg's closest friends said. But Hackenberg persisted. Within a week, other beekeepers—people he didn't even know—began calling him to tell him that their bees, too, had disappeared. "I became an expert all of a sudden on something I don't know anything about," Hackenberg said.

All sorts of theories were soon proposed. The mysterious ailment was a new disease, or it was a response to drought, or to stress, or to toxins. According to one widely reported hypothesis, cell-phone transmissions were disrupting the bees' navigational abilities. (Few experts took the cell-phone conjecture seriously; as one scientist said to me, "If that were the case, Dave Hackenberg's hives would have been dead a long time ago.")

For his part, Hackenberg decided that the culprit was a new class of insecticides, called neonicotinoids. Neonicotinoids are neurotoxins that, as the name implies, chemically resemble nicotine. They are considered safer for humans than many other classes of pesticides, because they interfere with neural pathways that are more common in insects than in mammals, but from a bee's perspective that obviously isn't much of a recommendation. (The most commonly used neonicotinoid, imidacloprid, is considered "highly toxic" to bees, and therefore is not supposed to be applied while they are around.) In March, Hackenberg sent a letter to growers, asking that they "please try to use something beside these products" on their crops.

Meanwhile, he and Davey began to rebuild. They ordered new bees, which they had air-freighted from Australia, and new queens, which were flown in from Hawaii. They split any colony that seemed to be healthy into two and persuaded a firm that usually sterilizes contact-lens solution to blast several truckloads of beekeeping equipment with radiation. By the spring, they had managed to restock some two thousand hives. They had also spent more than three hundred thousand dollars.

"Last year, we had just enough to keep going, but not enough to survive on," Davey told me. "It's, like, give us a sign: either wipe the damn things out or tell us what we're supposed to do here. We're just hanging on by the skin of our teeth. If we go through this another year, we'll be flat-broke out of business."

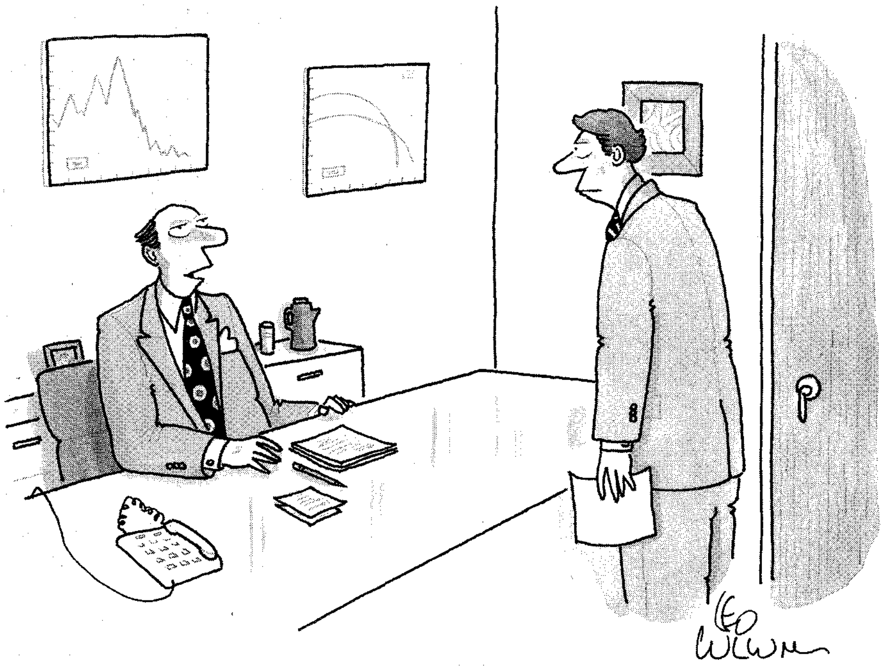
On a sunny Saturday this spring, I drove to Betterbee, an apiary-supply store in Greenwich, New York, about forty miles north of Albany. When I arrived, the place was crowded with beekeepers and aspiring beekeepers, some from as far away as Maryland, who were queued up in the parking lot. On reaching the front of the line, I was handed a package, much the way you would be handed a loaf of bread, or a pizza. It gave off a slight, insistent buzz.

A package—in beekeeping, this is a precise rather than a generic term—is a container about the size of a shoebox, with wooden sides and wire mesh covering the front and back. It holds about fourteen thousand worker bees and a single queen, who is housed, along with a few devoted attendants, in a tiny cage. The workers and the queen are not from the same original colony, and the queen is kept secluded to give the other bees time to grow accustomed to her odor. The queen cage has a special stopper on one end, made out of a substance called "queen candy." The hope is that by the time the workers are able to eat their way through the candy and liberate the queen they will have accepted her as their leader and not try to kill her.

Left to their own devices, honeybees construct their hives in cavities, usually in trees and preferably with small openings that face south. They attach their wax combs to the top of the cavity, and build downward in parallel sheets lined on both sides with hexagonal cells. These cells are used for all the bees' various needs—to house the young, to store pollen and nectar, and to preserve honey. (To make honey from nectar, bees combine it with special enzymes in their "honey stomachs" and then evaporate out the water.) The key to beekeeping is to persuade a colony to construct its combs where people can get at them. The ancient Egyptians fashioned conical hives out of hardened mud. Since then, hives have been made out of practically every substance imaginable, including clay, stone, logs, bark, wicker, cork, and bamboo. Skeps—bell-shaped straw hives of the sort still popular in cartoons—were widely used in seventeenth-century Europe and were brought to the New World by some of the earliest colonists. (Before the colonists arrived, there were no honeybees anywhere in the Americas.)

Nowadays, nearly all beekeepers use hives of the same basic design, developed a century and a half ago by the Reverend Lorenzo Lorraine Langstroth, a Congregational minister from Philadelphia. Langstroth suffered from severe psychiatric difficulties; attempting to preach his first sermon, he came down with an acute case of what might be called rector's block, and was unable to speak. (He referred to this as the start of his "head troubles.") He took up beekeeping in the hope that the outdoor work would clear his mind.

Langstroth's crucial insight—"I could scarcely refrain from shouting 'Eureka!' in the open streets," he wrote of the moment of revelation—was the concept of "bee space." He realized that while honeybees will seal up passageways that are either too large or too



"On the other hand, the sand I'm burying my head in is in Amagansett."

"You're going to have to move, pal. I've got people coming at seven."

• •

small, they will leave open passages that are just the right size to allow a bee to pass through comfortably. Langstroth determined that if frames were placed at this "bee-space" interval of three-eighths of an inch, bees would build honeycomb that could be lifted from the hive, rather than, as was the practice up to that point, sliced or hacked out of it. He patented L. L. Langstroth's Movable Comb Hive in 1852. Today's version consists of a number of rectangular boxes—the number is supposed to grow during the season—open at the top and at the bottom. Each box is equipped with inner lips from which frames can be hung, like folders in a filing drawer, and each frame comes with special tabs to preserve bee space.

I set up my hive at the edge of a small brook that runs through the back yard. Within a day of being installed, my bees—Italians—were hard at work. They could be seen zipping out of the little opening in the front and returning with yellow wads of pollen stuffed into the baskets on their legs. Even my teen-age son found the sight of their proverbial busyness hard to resist. On returning home from school, he would lounge against a nearby tree and watch.

One of the people that David Hackenberg called to tell about his dead hives was Pennsylvania's state apiary inspector, Dennis van Engelsdorp. Van Engelsdorp does not normally keep bees himself, but at the time that I went to visit him, a few weeks ago, he had eight hives in his yard, arranged in a horseshoe. The hives' owner had identified them as suffering from C.C.D., and van Engelsdorp had brought them home because he was interested in seeing how long it would take for them to collapse entirely. He asked me if I wanted to have a look. We both put on bee gear—a sort of cross between a hazmat suit and a fencing mask. Van Engelsdorp smoked the first hive, then pulled out a frame. To me, it looked perfectly ordinary, except that, as van Engelsdorp pointed out, there were almost no bees on it.

"If you look here, you can see eggs, so the queen's trying," van Engelsdorp said, passing me the frame. We had neglected to put gloves on, but this didn't seem to matter, because the few bees there were so listless. I could see eggs, which resemble tiny grains of rice, at the bottom of several dozen cells.

"She's cranking," he went on. "Those eggs are on their side, so they're three days old. But this colony's just not building. It's not a factor of there not being enough young bees coming out, but it seems to be a factor of the fact that the adult population is disappearing. So this is an indication where I think this colony will be completely collapsed next week."

And so it went. In the second colony, van Engelsdorp spotted what are known as "supercedure" cells. These cells, which hang off the honeycomb like misshapen peanuts, are a sign that worker bees are trying to produce a new queen. (An ordinary larva grows into a queen if it is fed on a special high-calorie diet of royal jelly.)

"This is another thing we're seeing," van Engelsdorp told me. "The queens don't seem to hold as long. It's sort of like bees coughing, trying to get rid of some illness that they associate with the queen." A third hive was almost completely empty. Van Engelsdorp poked around inside it, looking for signs of wax moths or small hive beetles, insects that prey on weak colonies, but found none. "So whatever is killing the bees, is it also killing the moths or is it just driving them out, or what?" he asked. After going through the rest of the hives, van Engelsdorp decided to conduct an anatomical inspection. He picked up a worker, pinched the end of her abdomen between his fingers, and pulled. A slimy, cream-colored thread emerged. This was the bee's rectum, its kidneys—or Malpighian tubules—and its intestines. He tossed the bee on the ground, and repeated the process with another bee.

Van Engelsdorp, who is thirty-seven, has a bearish build, thinning blond hair, and deep-set blue eyes. He lives in the woods about thirty miles west of Harrisburg, in a one-room cabin with an unheated porch that he sleeps on year-round. Like many people who started to hear from Hackenberg last fall, van Engelsdorp wasn't initially very concerned. He figured that the problem had to do with mites or—much the same thing—with one of the many diseases, like deformed-wing virus, that the mites transmit. (The fact that Hackenberg hadn't found any dead bees was odd, but sick honeybees often leave the hive to expire.) What convinced him otherwise was slicing up some bees that Hackenberg brought from Florida.

Normally, if you cut open a bee its innards, viewed under a microscope, will appear white. Hackenberg's bees were filled with black scar tissue. They seemed to be suffering not so much from any particular ailment as from just about every ailment. "There was just so much wrong with them," van Engelsdorp recalled. "And there weren't any mites."

After more beekeepers began reporting problems, van Engelsdorp started travelling around the country, collecting samples. Some he preserved in alcohol, for his own lab; others he put on dry ice, to be sent out for more sophisticated molecular tests. (Soon, he was so overwhelmed by samples that he had to hire an assistant, whose job consists entirely of conducting bee autopsies.) When the molecular tests were performed, by entomologists at Penn State, they confirmed van Engelsdorp's initial impression. The bees were infected with just about every bee virus known, including deformed-wing virus, sac-brood virus, and black-queen-cell virus, and also by various fungi and bacteria. In addition, genetic analysis revealed the presence of new pathogens, never before sequenced. Such was the level of infection that van Engelsdorp and other researchers concluded that the bees' immune systems had collapsed. It was as if an insect version of AIDS were sweeping through the hives.

One evening at around ten o'clock, in the middle of a downpour, my husband heard an odd noise. It sounded to him like clattering, and it seemed to be coming from the general direction of our hive. When he went outside to check, a bear was standing where previously the boxes had been stacked. The frames were scattered in the weeds.

The next morning, thousands of bees were clustered against the base of a nearby tree. Thousands more were lying dead on the ground. I righted the hive and gathered up the frames. Then, using a garden trowel, I spooned as many of the survivors as I could back into the boxes. That night, the bear attacked again. Do bees suffer? I regret to say that I think they do. Those who made it through the second attack spent their days grumpily buzzing around, or huddled pathetically together. Within two weeks, they, too, were dead.

Most beekeeping manuals advise against trying to raise bees on the basis of a manual. Instead, they suggest finding a more experienced beekeeper who lives nearby or joining a local beekeeping organization. The nearest group I could find was the Southern Vermont Beekeepers, and one evening I attended a meeting in the back of a Manchester bookstore. The guest speaker was the Vermont state apiary inspector, and he spent a while talking about colony-collapse disorder, which hadn't been found in Vermont, and then about varroa mites and tracheal mites and American foulbrood and nosema and small hive beetles, all of which had. When he called for questions, the discussion quickly turned to bears. Practically everyone had a story to tell. Ordinary fences, it was agreed, were useless, and even electric ones could be breached. One man said that he draped his electric fence with bacon; this enticed the bear to stick his nose against the wires and get zapped. Another recommended driving nails through plywood, then laying the plywood around the hive, nail-side up.

"It definitely keeps the bears out," he said of the arrangement.

"It's not too good for the inspector who steps on a nail," the inspector said.

"Get a tetanus shot," a second man suggested.

On my return home, I relayed what I'd learned to my husband. I told him I was opposed to the nail approach, and he said he was opposed to an electric fence. Ultimately, we settled on a third option, not recommended by anyone. We ran a wire cable between two trees, about twenty feet off the ground, and attached a pulley to it. Then we mounted the hive on a platform that could be raised and lowered by rope. Since it was too late in the season to get another package, we ordered what's known as a nucleus hive, or nuc, which, once again, I went to pick up at Betterbee. It came in a plastic-foam container resembling a cooler. Instead of Italians, the bees in the nuc were Carniolans. The queen, who can be hard to spot, because Carniolans are so dark, had been marked with a tiny yellow dot.

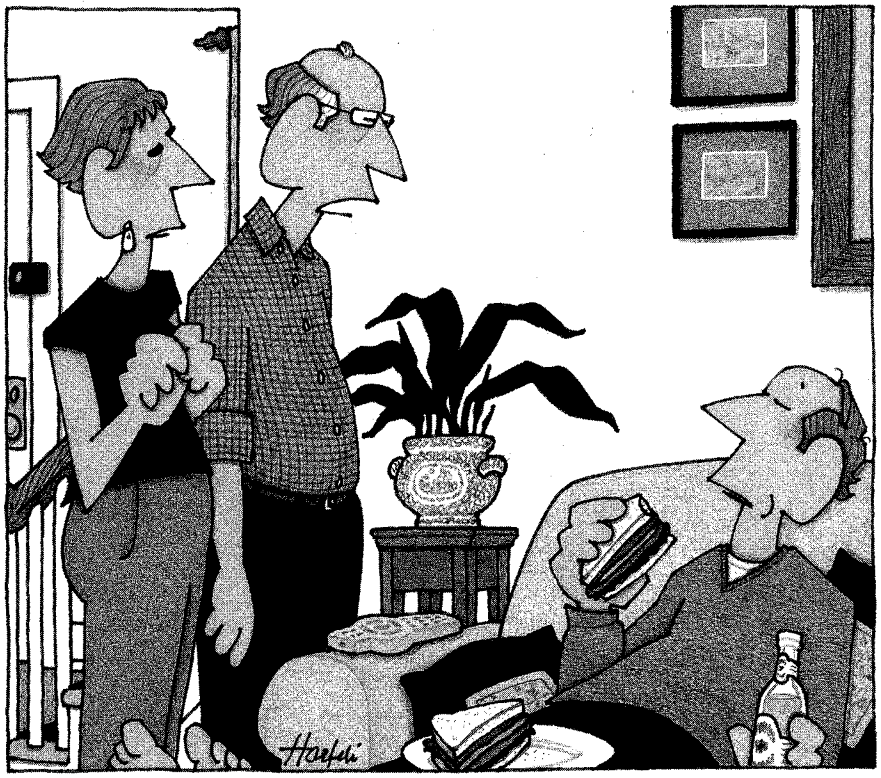
For ten days, the aerial hive worked fine. On the eleventh, I went out to check on it and found the boxes on the ground. The frames had all tumbled out, and the bees were buzzing around wildly. I wasn't sure what had happened until I spotted a small black bear a few yards away. Presumably, he had climbed a tree and swatted at the hive until it fell. I chased him away, put on my beekeeping gear, and set the frames back in place. The platform was dangling over my head. While I was trying to figure out my next move, I got stung on the chin. I retreated, and, when I looked up, the bear had returned. He sidled over to one of the boxes I had righted, and tried to tip it over. Bees swarmed toward his face. He tumbled back. He tried again. The same thing happened. He sat down. For several minutes, we eyed each other warily. Finally, a tractor came to mow a nearby field and the sound of it drove him off.

I had lost one colony, and now it seemed that I was about to lose another. My husband announced that he had had enough of bees, but, both morally and journalistically, I felt committed. I persuaded him to restring the cable between two trees that were farther apart, and we raised the hive back up. Much to my amazement, this seemed to work.

Dr. Ian Lipkin is the head of the Jerome L. and Dawn Greene Infectious Disease Laboratory at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. He is a slight man with sandy-colored hair and a boyishly unlined face. When he was in medical school, Lipkin intended to become an internist, but then he became interested in neurology, which, in turn, led him to molecular biology. "The thing about molecular biology is, it's like a magic trick," Lipkin told me when I went to speak to him one day this summer in his office, in upper Manhattan. "Once you know the trick, you say, 'I should have seen that.' "

Last December, Lipkin received an e-mail from an entomologist at Penn State. The e-mail asked for his help in solving the mystery of C.C.D. This was two months before C.C.D. began to make news, and Lipkin had no idea what the entomologist was talking about. He wondered whether the e-mail was genuine. "I get a lot of kooks writing me," he explained. Lipkin knew almost nothing about the ailments of invertebrates, and even less about bees, but his lab had done a lot of work on zoonoses—diseases, like avian flu, that originated in animals and have "jumped" species to infect humans."I decided, Well, why not diseases of insects? It's sort of a natural extension," he told me. He agreed to help, and soon was sent some of the bees that van Engelsdorp had collected.

Lipkin subjected the bees to what is called "metagenomic analysis." As he described it to me, the goal of the process is to extract all the genetic information available from a given sample, in this case not just the bees themselves but also the protozoa, bacteria, viruses, and fungi that had been living in them. "It's like if we took you, your shoes, your socks, your sweater, and sequenced everything," Lipkin said. "Then we need to figure out what was shoes, what was socks, and what was you." (Just last year, scientists at the Baylor College of Medicine, in Houston, published the entire honeybee genome sequence, consisting of some two hundred and sixty million base pairs.) At various points, Lipkin assigned more than a dozen researchers in his lab to work on the project, sometimes seven days a week.



"When I was your age, I was an adult."

The metagenomic analysis confirmed van Engelsdorp's initial impression. Bees suffering from C.C.D. were infected not with one pathogen but with many, and the most economical explanation was that their immune systems were compromised. This left the central question still to be answered: Why was this happening?

At the time that I spoke to him, Lipkin had just sent off a paper on C.C.D. to a scientific journal. He was reluctant to discuss its contents, for fear of jeopardizing its acceptance, but he did indicate that it contained what he considered to be a breakthrough. One pathogen in particular was, in his words, "highly associated" with C.C.D.

"My speculation would be that this particular pathogen is a trigger that takes an otherwise borderline population and throws it over the edge," he told me. "I think that's what we're seeing." Lipkin explained that the process of finding the pathogen responsible for an outbreak was "the same whether we're talking about encephalitis or diarrheal disease or hemorrhagic fevers or respiratory disease. You put up a candidate and then try to tear it down. And, if you can't tear it down, it's probably bona fide. That's how we do science." He wouldn't tell me what kind of pathogen he was talking about in the case of C.C.D., but soon I learned that it was a virus. I also learned that it was suspected that the virus had entered the U.S. on imported bees.

So far, C.C.D. has been reported in thirty-six states, including California, New York, Texas, Florida, and New Jersey. There are no reliable estimates of how many hives have been wiped out by the disorder, but commercial beekeepers seem to have been particularly hard hit, with some reporting losses of up to ninety per cent. A number of beekeeping businesses have already failed; when I met up with David Hackenberg, he showed me a stack of boxes he had bought from an operation that had recently gone under. It's impossible to predict how many businesses will be left after this year. During the summer, when the nectar is flowing, even weak colonies can appear to be healthy. The test will come in the fall, the season when C.C.D. was first discovered.

I asked several entomologists what could be done if, in fact, C.C.D. did turn out to be caused or, to use Lipkin's word, "triggered" by a virus, and got back a wide range of answers. New, resistant strains of honeybees could, at least in theory, be bred. Bees could, once again in theory, be treated with antiviral drugs or, alternatively, the virus might burn itself out. (A recent paper co-written by van Engelsdorp shows that unexplained honeybee die-offs have occurred in the U.S. fourteen times in the past hundred years.) Finally, there is the possibility that C.C.D. could keep spreading until people just give up on raising honeybees.

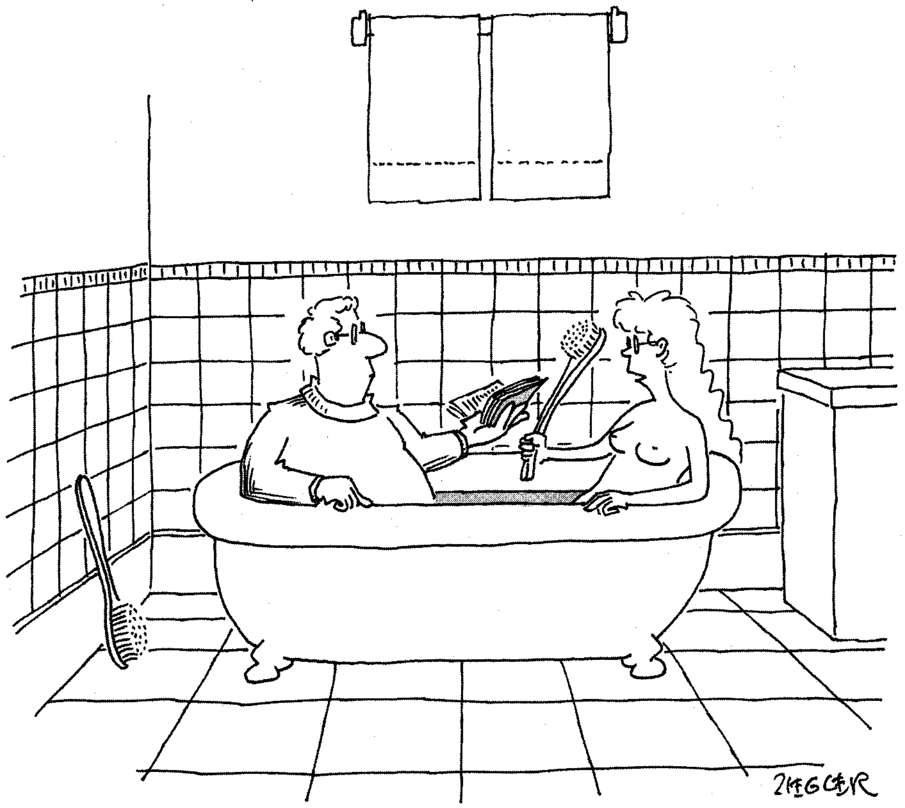
Under this last, worst-case scenario, other pollinators would have to be found to perform the work that honeybees now do. There are thousands of candidates—mostly other species of bees, but perhaps also certain moths or thrips. For some crops, alternative pollinators could well prove more efficient than *Apis mellifera;* honeybees don't particularly like squash or pumpkin flowers, for example, while *Peponapis pruinosa*, commonly known as the squash bee, does. But the challenges are enormous. Only a fraction of pollinators are generalists, and even fewer are social. Meanwhile, wild pollinators are, by most accounts, in the midst of a crisis of their own.

Last October, just a few weeks before Hackenberg observed the strange symptoms of C.C.D., the National Research Council issued a report titled "The Status of Pollinators in North America." Fifteen scientists from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico had spent a year reviewing the available literature and interviewing experts. They noted that few systematic studies had been done; still, there was plenty of evidence of decline. The Franklin bumblebee, for instance—a mostly black bee native to northwest California and southwest Oregon—was abundant in 1998, but the following year went into a steep and probably terminal decline. None were seen in 2004 and 2005 and only one was found last year. Similarly, the rusty patched bumblebee, once common in New York, hasn't been sighted since 2001. In Britain, where better records have been kept, more than half the native bumblebee species either have become extinct or are facing extinction in the next few decades. Among the many possible contributing factors that the report cited are habitat loss, pesticide use, climate change, and introduced pathogens. May Berenbaum, a professor of entomology at the University of Illinois, chaired the National Research Council panel; she recently characterized C.C.D. as "a crisis on top of a crisis."

"We can't count on wild pollinators, because we've so altered the landscape that many are no longer viable," she said.

As the National Research Council report noted, invertebrate extinctions don't tend to have much "marquee appeal." Yet if it's a bad sign when an ecosystem loses its large mammals, it is probably an even worse sign when it can no longer support its insects. The report put it this way: "Pollinator decline is one form of global change that actually does have credible potential to alter the shape and structure of the terrestrial world."

As for my honeybees, they seem to be doing fine. After their unfortunate fall, I was worried that the queen might have been crushed or perhaps suffocated by her nervous attendants, an accident known as "balling." In that case, the colony would have had to go through the risky exercise of breeding a new queen and getting her mated. But just the other day I lowered the hive, smoked it, and opened the cover. When I pulled out a frame, it was dripping with honey. I could see lots of fat little larvae curled up in their cells, proof that the queen was alive and laying. To my fond, unpracticed eye, it all seemed beautiful. I put the cover on and hoisted the hive back up. As of this writing, it is still there, swaying between the trees. ♦



"You're not really into this, are you, Frank?"

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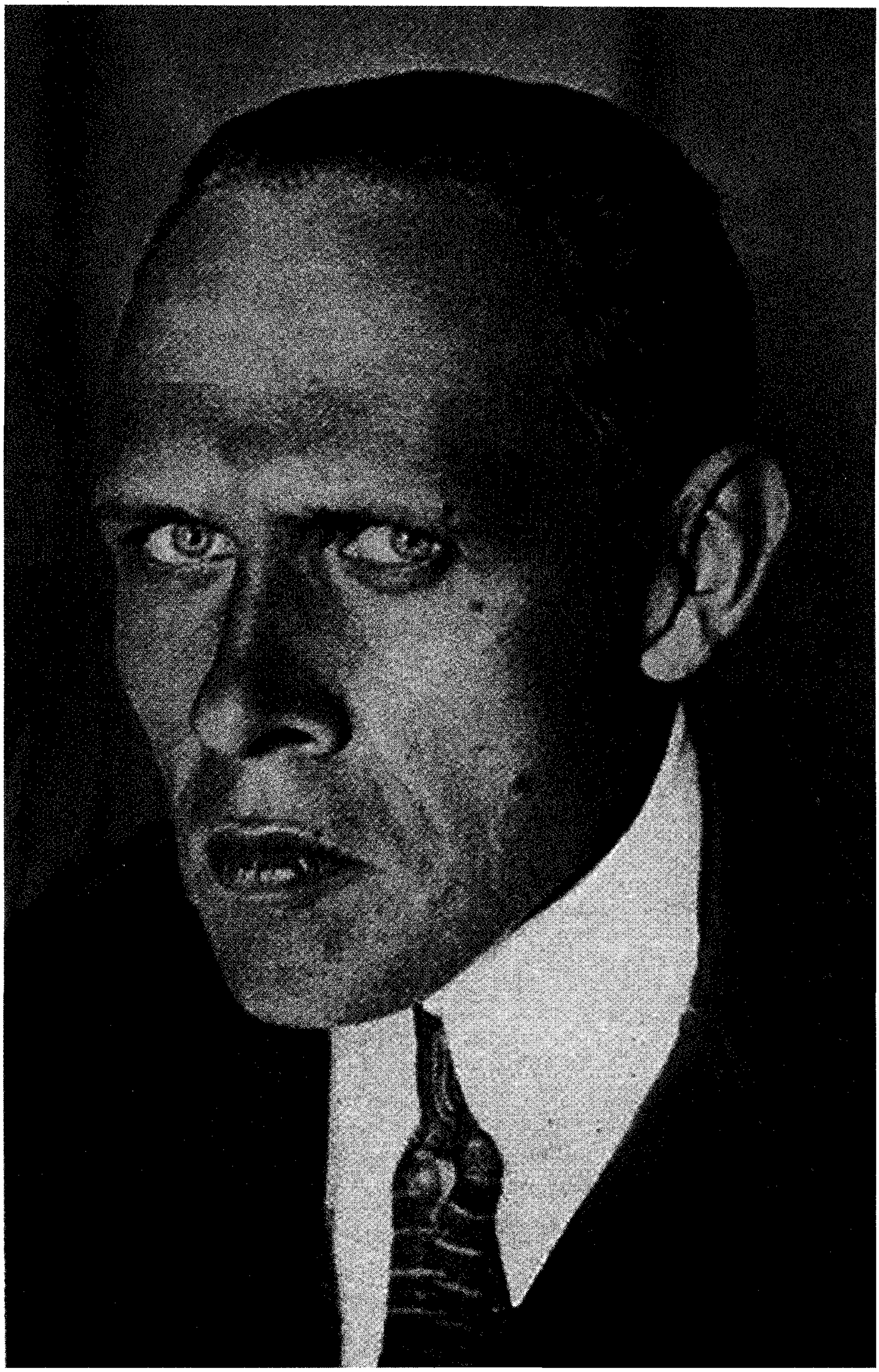
Kolbert and her bees in an audio slide show.

FICTION

SO IT IS IN LIFE

BY DANIIL KHARMS



Born in St. Petersburg in 1905, Daniil Kharms was one of the founders, in 1928, of OBERIU, or Association of Real Art, an avant-garde group of writers and artists who embraced the ideas of the Futurists and believed that art should operate outside the rules of logic. In his lifetime, Kharms produced several works for children, but his writing for adults was not published. In 1931, Kharms was charged with anti-Soviet activities and briefly exiled from Leningrad. In 1941, he was arrested by the N.K.V.D. for making "defeatist statements"; sentenced to incarceration in the psychiatric ward of a prison hospital, he died of starvation the following year, during the siege of Leningrad. It wasn't until the late nineteen-seventies that Kharms's playful and poetic work began to appear in mainstream publications in Russia. Several books followed, as did festivals in Kharms's honor and critical comparisons to Beckett, Camus, and Ionesco. The following texts have never been published in English.

At two o'clock on Nevsky Prospekt, or, rather, on the Avenue of October 25th, nothing of note occurred. No, no, that man who has stopped near the Coliseum is there purely by accident. Maybe his bootlace came untied, or maybe he wanted to light a cigarette. Or something else entirely! He's just a visitor and doesn't know where to go. But where are his things? Wait, he's raising his head for some reason, as if to look into the third floor, or even the fourth, maybe even the fifth. No, look, he simply sneezed, and now he's on his way again. He slouches a little and his shoulders are hunched. His green overcoat flaps in the wind. Just now he turned onto Nadezhdenskaya and disappeared around the corner.

A shoeshine man with Eastern features stared after him and smoothed his fluffy mustache with his hand.

His overcoat was long and thick, of a purple hue, either plaid or striped, or maybe, damn it all, polka dot.

(1931)

How strange, how indescribably strange, that behind the wall, this very wall, there's a man with an angry face sitting on the floor with his legs stretched out, wearing red boots.

If one could only punch a hole in the wall and look through it, one would see right away that this angry man is sitting there.

But it's better not to think about him. What is he? Is he not a particle of a dead life that has drifted in from the imaginary void? Whoever he may be, God be with him.

(1931)

We lived in two rooms. My friend had the smaller room, while I had a rather large room, three windows across. My friend would go out all day and come back only to spend the night. As for me, I was in my room all the time, and if I went out it was either to the post office or to buy something for dinner. In addition, I had a case of dry pleurisy, which gave me all the more reason to stay put.

I like being alone. But then a month went by, and I got sick of my solitude. Books didn't entertain me, and I often sat at my desk for long stretches without writing a line. I would pick up my book again, leaving the page blank. And in that sickly state on top of everything! In short, I started to sulk.

The city I lived in at that time was loathsome to me. It stood on a hill, and everywhere you looked it was like a picture postcard. I became so disgusted with those views that I was happier to stay at home. And, really, apart from the post office, the market, and the store, there was nowhere to go.

And so I sat at home like a hermit.

There were days when I ate nothing. On those days I would try to manufacture a joyous mood for myself. I would lie down on my bed and smile. I'd smile for twenty minutes at a time, but then the smile would turn into a yawn. That was not at all pleasant. I would open my mouth just enough to make a smile, but it would open wider and I'd yawn. I'd start daydreaming.

I saw before me an earthen jug full of milk and pieces of fresh bread. And myself sitting at a desk and writing quickly. On the desk, the chairs, and the bed were sheets of paper covered in writing. And I wrote more and more, winking and smiling at my ideas. And how nice that nearby was the bread and the milk and a walnut snuffbox full of tobacco!

I opened the window and looked out at the garden. Violet and yellow flowers grew right next to the house. Tobacco was also growing, and a big military-chestnut tree stood farther away. And, over there, the beginning of an orchard.

It was very quiet. Only trains whistled under the mountain.

Today I couldn't do anything. I paced the room, then sat down at the desk, but soon I'd rise and switch to the rocking chair. I'd pick up a book and right away discard it, and pace the room again.

I suddenly had the impression that I had forgotten something, some incident or important word.

I painstakingly tried to remember this word, and it seemed to me that it began with the letter "M." No, no! Not with an "M" at all but with an "R."

Reason? Rapture? Rectangle? Rib? Or: Mind? Misery? Matter?

I was making coffee and singing to myself all the words that started with "R." Oh, what a tremendous number of words I made up beginning with the letter "R"! Perhaps among them was that one word, but I didn't recognize it, taking it to be the same as all the others.

Then again, perhaps that word didn't come up.

(1932-33)

A neck stuck out of the collar of the fool's shirt, and on the neck was a head. The head was at one time closely cropped. By now the hair had grown out like a brush. The fool talked about a lot of things. No one listened to him. Everyone thought, When will he shut up and leave? But the fool, noticing nothing, continued talking and laughing.

Finally, Elbov couldn't stand it any longer and went up to the fool and said, curtly and viciously, "Make yourself scarce this very minute." The fool looked around, at a loss, without a clue to what was going on. Elbov gave the fool a clout on the ear. The fool flew out of his chair and dropped to the floor. Elbov gave the fool a

A self-portrait of the author, 1932. "I am interested only in nonsense, only in that which has no practical meaning," he wrote in 1937.

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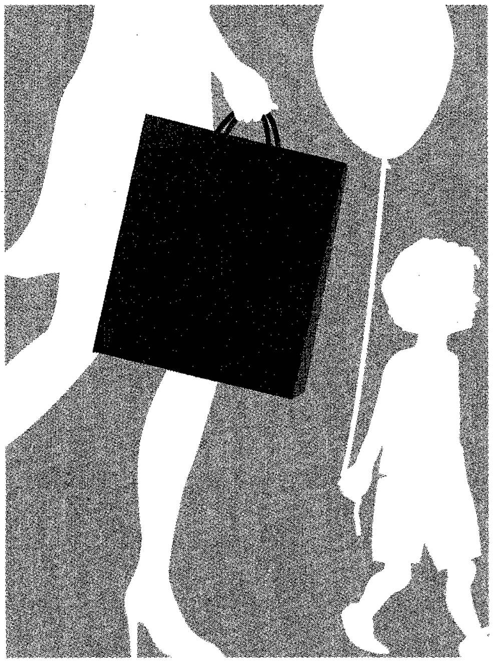

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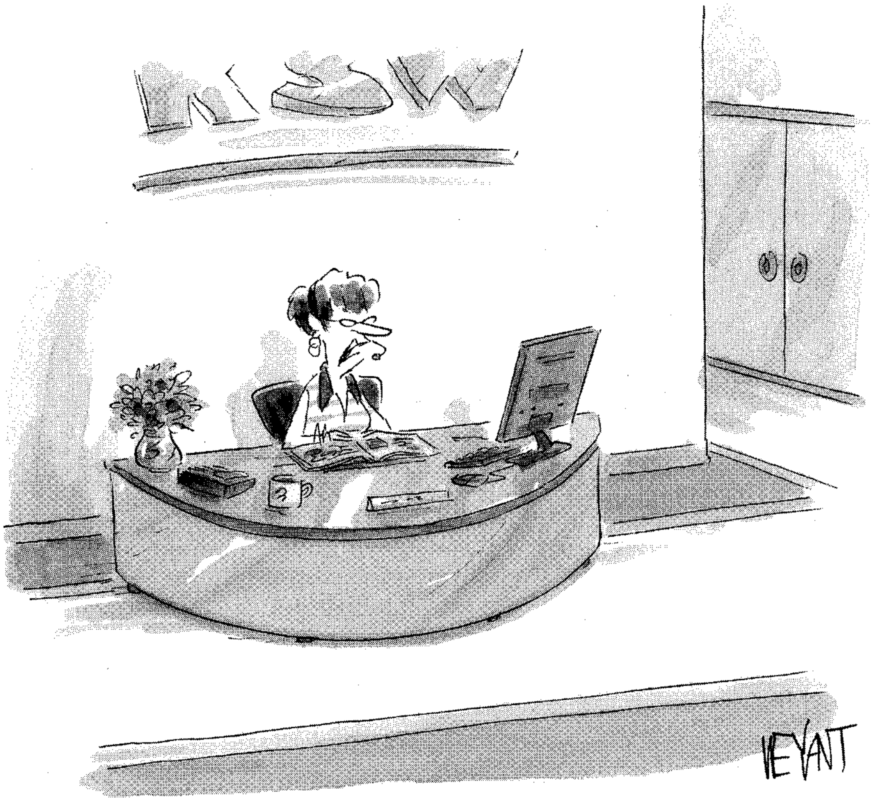

"I'm sorry, he's in a meeting with a jury of his peers. Would you like to leave a message?"

• •

kick and he went flying through the doorway and rolled down the stairs.

—

So it is in life: a fool through and through, and yet he wants to express himself. He needs to be punched in the snout. That's right—in the snout!

Everywhere I look I see this foolish mug of a convict. A boot in the snout is what he needs.

(1934)

A window with a drawn curtain was getting brighter and brighter because the day was beginning. The floors squeaked, the doors creaked, chairs were being moved around in apartments. Climbing out of bed, Ruzhetsky fell on the floor and smashed his face. He was in a rush to get to work, so he went outside, covering his face with his hands. His hands made it hard for him to see where he was going. Twice he bumped into an advertising kiosk; then he shoved some old man in a vinyl hat with fur earflaps, which sent the old man into such a fury that a janitor, who happened to be in proximity, because he was trying to catch a cat with a shovel, said to the increasingly agitated old man, "Shame on you, Gramps, for making so much trouble at your age."

(1935)

A Frenchman was given a couch, four chairs, and an armchair. The Frenchman sat down on the chair by the window, but then he wanted to lie around on the couch. The Frenchman sat on the couch, but then he wanted to sit awhile in the armchair. The Frenchman got up from the couch and sat down in the armchair like a king, but in his own head he already had thoughts like: It's a bit too opulent in the armchair; better to be a little plainer, on the chair. The Frenchman switched to the chair by the window, but he was restless in this chair, because there was a kind of draft coming from the window. The Frenchman switched to the chair near the stove and realized that he was tired. Then the Frenchman decided to lie down on the couch and rest, but before he made it to the couch he veered off to the side and sat down in the armchair.

"Now, that's good!" the French-

man said, but right away he added, "But it's probably better on the couch."
(Late nineteen-thirties)

Marina told me that one Sharik visited her in bed. Who, or what, this Sharik was I couldn't for the life of me determine.

A few days later, this Sharik visited again. Then he started coming quite often, about every three days.

I was not at home. When I came home, Marina told me that Cinderyushkin had called on the phone asking for me. Apparently, if you can believe it, some Cinderyushkin wanted me!

Marina bought some apples. We ate a few after dinner and left maybe two apples for later that evening. But in the evening, when I wanted to claim my apple, the apple was not to be found. Marina said that Misha the waiter had come by and taken the apples away for a salad. He didn't need the cores, so he had cleaned the apples right there in our room and thrown the cores away in the wastepaper basket.

I found out that Sharik, Cinderyushkin, and Misha usually live in our stove. It's hard for me to comprehend how they got settled in there.

I was asking Marina about Sharik, Cinderyushkin, and Misha. Marina tried to avoid giving me any straight answers. When I let her know of my fear that this company was possibly not completely good-natured, Marina assured me that, in any case, they were "Golden Hearts." I could get nothing more out of Marina.

Over time, I learned that the Golden Hearts had not all had the same level of education. To be honest, Sharik had received a high-school education, and Cinderyushkin and Misha had received none at all. Sharik had even written some scholarly works. And for that reason his attitude toward the rest of the Golden Hearts was somewhat haughty.

I was very curious as to what sort of scholarly works these were. But that remained unknown. Marina said that he had been born with a pen in his hand, but didn't divulge any more details of his scholarly activities. I began to suss it out and, finally, I learned that he was in the cobbler's line of work. Whether this had anything to do with his scholarly activity I was unable to determine.

Once, I learned that the Golden Hearts had had a party. They'd pooled their money and bought a marinated eel. Misha had even brought a jar of vodka. It should be said: Misha likes to drink.

Sharik's boots were made out of cork.

One evening Marina told me that Cinderyushkin called me a troublemaker because I'd stepped on his foot. I also got angry and asked Marina to pass on to Cinderyushkin that he should stay out of my way.
(1935-36)

When sleep is running away from a man, and the man lies on his bed, dumbly stretching out his legs, while nearby a clock ticks on the nightstand and sleep is running away from the clock, then it seems to the man that an immense black window opens wide before him and that his thin little gray human soul is going to fly out through this window and his lifeless body will stay lying on the bed, dumbly stretching out its legs, and the clock will ring its quiet bell: "Yet another man has fallen asleep." At that moment, the immense and utterly black window will swing shut with a bang.

A man by the last name of Oknov was lying on his bed, dumbly stretching out his legs, trying to fall asleep. But sleep was running away from Oknov. Oknov lay with his eyes open, and frightening thoughts knocked inside his increasingly wooden head.
(1938) ♦

(Translated, from the Russian, by Matvei Yankelevich, with Simona Schneider and Eugene Ostashevsky.)

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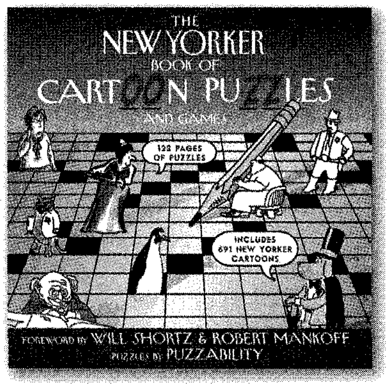
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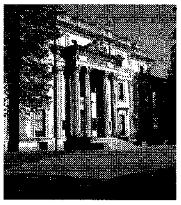

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THE CRITICS

BOOKS

LIVES OF OTHERS

The biography business.

BY LOUIS MENAND

At a time when instruments for recording and disseminating information about people's intimate behavior are cheap and easy to use, and when newspapers and magazines and television programs and Web sites purvey that kind of information without restraint, and when even ordinary people apparently can't do enough to tell the world everything about themselves, a defense of the professional biographer's right to pry does not seem something that civilization stands in dire need of. Just in case, though, two such defenses have recently been published.

Meryle Secrest is a biographer who has nine lives so far, all of figures in the arts, including Kenneth Clark, Leonard Bernstein, Frank Lloyd Wright, Richard Rodgers, and Salvador Dali. Her memoir, "Shoot the Widow" (Knopf; $25.95), is candid about the commercial bones of the enterprise. She started out as a reporter for local papers, in Canada and England, a job calling for a continual sacrifice of literary refinement in the interests of filling the page and meeting the deadline, and she approaches biography in something of the same spirit. "Deciding on a subject is mostly a cold-blooded business of weighing the subject against potential markets, timeliness, the availability of material, and the likelihood of getting the story, the kinds of factors publishers have to worry about," she explains. Many of her stories about getting the story involve figuring out ways to maximize her advances from publishers and to massage the relatives, friends, ex-friends, lovers, ex-lovers, work associates, lawyers, dealers, executors, and agents—the many "widows" whom, as her title suggests, only semi-facetiously, she would like to shoot—who obscure a clear view into the private world of famous people.

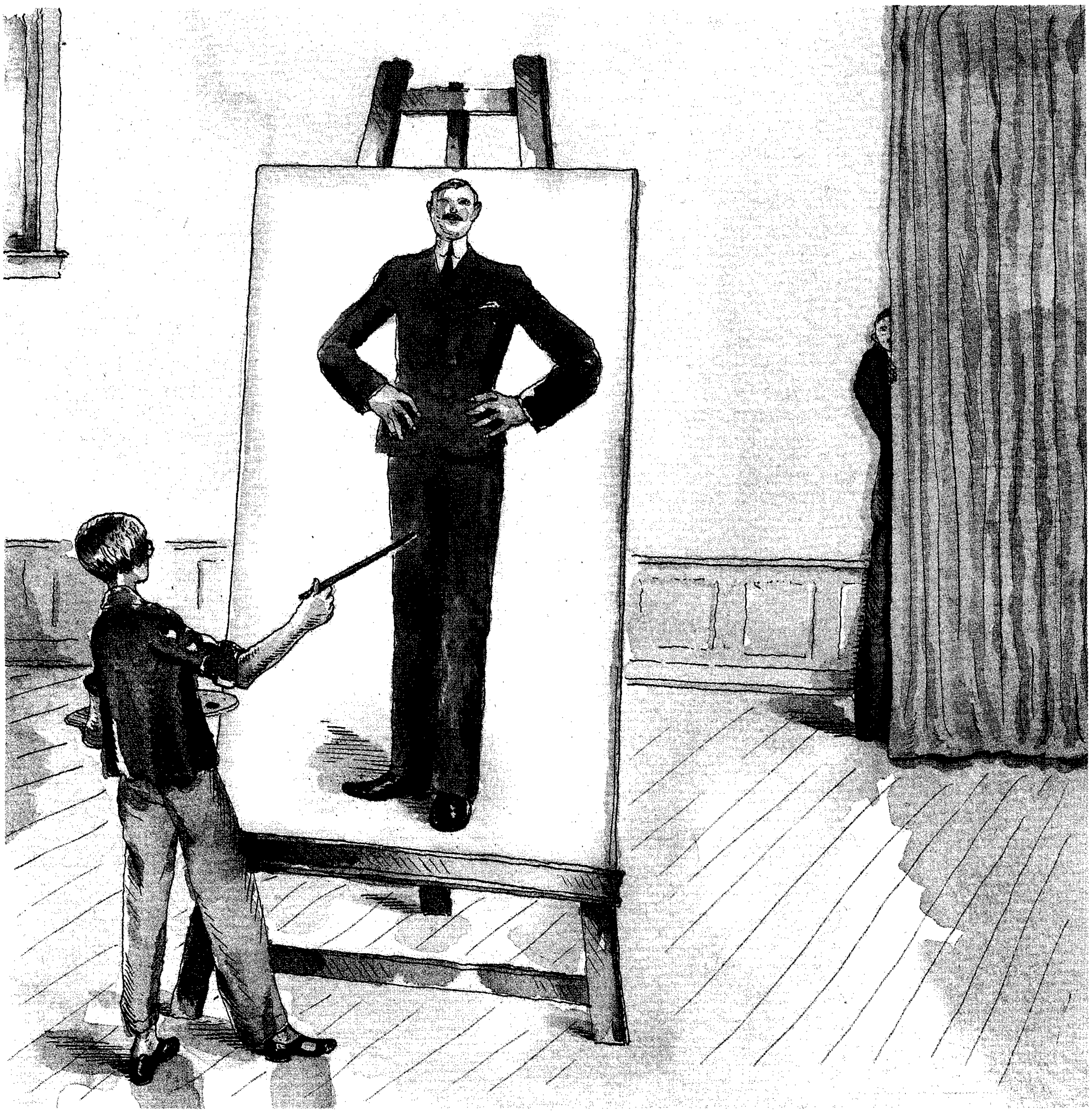
What those uncoöperative witnesses want—and what the famous people themselves want, too, when, as has sometimes been the case for Secrest, they are still alive and competent to make trouble—is what everybody wants in life: to control the narrative. Secrest is either touchingly ingenuous or carefully disingenuous about this central fact of the biographical transaction: in her account, she is repeatedly astonished by the efforts people make to gerrymander the story to suit their interests—although, she says, she has grown wiser. "The older I get the more sympathy I have for families who discover that some stranger has decided to write about their famous member without, as it were, so much as a by-your-leave," she admits. "Prurience titillates, the more the better, leading to bigger sales and better royalties for the writer who is, not to put too fine a point on it, making money from others' misfortunes."

Still, her collisions with her subjects and the people around them seem never to have prevented her from deciding that her next project will somehow please everyone (and earn back a nice advance). Not all the reactions she had to cope with involved hurt feelings or wounded egos. In the course of her research on Richard Rodgers, she learned about a possible connection with organized crime, and interviewed a person she identifies as "an old Broadway hand" on the matter. "If you quote me, I won't kill you but I'll get you killed," he explained. "I won't do it myself but I've good connections. One day they will find you somewhere with your manuscript."

On the other hand, what were her subjects and their families and heirs and attendants *thinking* when they agreed to submit to her attentions? Secrest is, basically, a tell-all biographer—not Kitty Kelley, as she insists, not someone who would look to make her subjects feel ridiculed or humiliated, but she is interested mainly in the private lives of public people. She says that Kenneth Clark, who was a very wealthy man, the heir to a fortune made in the cotton industry, surreptitiously underwrote the publisher's advance in order to insure that Secrest would write his biography, and then seems to have imagined that he would be able to edit what she said about his wife's alcoholism and his own affairs. He tried, but he was not entirely successful, and Secrest claims that his son Alan, a powerful right-wing political figure in Britain, made sure that the reviews of her book there were vicious. (As she points out, Alan Clark went on to publish his own best-selling tell-all diary.)

"It seems to me that to invite someone's confidences and then betray that person is a kind of treachery," Secrest says. But she is in business because people *like* to confide. They want their stories told, and they somehow persuade themselves that in the right sympathetic hands their most embarrassing moments will be redeemed, and readers will appreciate the challenge, the complexity, the sheer human variousness of what it is like to be them. This is not on the theory that "there is no such thing as bad publicity." That theory is a canard; just ask Barry Bonds. It's on the theory that, at the end of the day, one's moral account will not only balance but be in the black. Probably most people believe this, deep down, about themselves. The unlucky get biographies.

The purpose of biography, Secrest says, is "not just to record but to reveal." That's what many people would say: that there's no point in writing, or reading, the life of a famous person *if* it doesn't uncover some previously unpublicized piece of personal information. This is because the premise of biographies is that the private



Biographers often operate on the Rosebud assumption that what is most private is most revealing.

BARRY BLITT

can account for the public, that the subject's accomplishments map onto his or her psychic history, and this premise is the justification for digging up the traumatic, the indefensible, and the shameful and getting it all into print. How centrally that kind of information figures in the biographical account depends on the tact and ingenuity of the biographer, but a biography that did not use events in its subject's personal life to explain his or her renown is almost unimaginable. Still, the premise poses a few problems.

For one thing, it leads biographers to invert the normal rules of evidence, on the Rosebud assumption that the real truth about a person involves the thing that is least known to others. A letter discovered in a trunk, or an entry in a personal notebook, trumps the public testimony of a hundred friends and colleagues. Biographers go into a professional swoon over stories that some famous person has made a bonfire of a portion of his or her correspondence, or that notebooks in an archive are embargoed until the year 2050. That stuff must explain everything! Why should we especially credit a remark made in a diary or a personal letter, though? The penalty for exaggeration and deception in those forms is virtually nonexistent. People lie in letters all the time, and they use diaries to moan and to vent. These are rarely sites for balanced and considered reflection. They are sites for gossip, flattery, and self-deception. But diaries and letters are the materials with which biographies are built, generally in the belief that the "real" person is the private person, and the public person is mostly a performance.

Secrest subscribes to this distinction between (as she puts it) "the private truth versus the public façade, appearance versus reality." She is also, like many biographers, a believer in turning points—"pivotal moments in a person's life when a single decision alters the future irrevocably." It's delightful to find (never concoct!) such moments, in which a chance encounter or a sudden revelation changes an ordinary life into the kind of life that people get paid to write books about, since those moments enable the biographer to construct the sort of conversion narrative, or Dick Whittington before-and-after story, that readers find familiar and take pleasure in. People like the notion that a little luck is involved in success—that becoming famous could be sort of like winning the lottery. One day, you're riding along on your donkey or in your Honda Civic or whatever, a voice speaks to you, and suddenly you are on the way to being St. Paul or Leonard Bernstein.

The essence of the turning point is that it is retrospective. No one realized at the time that when little Johnny Coltrane put down the duckie he would go on to create "A Love Supreme." But all biographies are retrospective in the same sense. Though they read chronologically forward, they are composed essentially backward. It's what happened later, the accomplishment for which the biographical subject is renowned, that determines the selection and interpretation of what happened earlier. This is the writer's procedure, and it is also the reader's. We know what Coltrane or Cleopatra or Churchill achieved when we pick up the book, and we process the stuff we didn't know, about their childhoods and their love lives and their abuse of whatever substances they may have abused, with this knowledge in mind. We are, in effect, helping the biographer do the work, because, like the biographer, we're reading with an already formed image of the subject in our heads. We would not tolerate a novel that opened with twenty pages about the hero's obscure grandparents and their miserable lives back in Perth or Minsk or Tenafly, but biographers get away with it all the time, because we go along with the presumption that the population, the sewage conditions, and the leading industry of eighteenth-century Perth are somehow inscribed in the hero's genetic code.

If we think about the laughable mess that is our own life—in which (even with the prevalence of cell-phone cameras) only a sliver of what we do and think and feel gets recorded, and the record that does exist is incomplete, or distorted, or captures states of mind that are transient—we may wonder whether the bits and pieces on which biographical narratives are often strung are not a little arbitrary. William James's diary entry "My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will," which makes a starring appearance in almost every life of him; Henry James's dream of a chase through the Louvre, whose Freudian unpacking is given a prominent place in Leon Edel's celebrated five-volume biography; Dickens's story, first told to his biographer John Forster, about his experience in the blacking factory—once these "pivotal moments" or primal episodes get established in the literature, they acquire an unstoppable explanatory force. But what if William James decided the next day that free will was overrated but didn't bother to write it down, or if Dickens later had a *really good* experience in a bluing factory, and never told anyone about it? All any biographer can hope, and all any reasonably skeptical reader can expect, is that the necessarily somewhat fictional character in the book bears some resemblance to the person who actually lived and died, and whose achievements (and disgraces) we care to learn more about. A biography is a tool for imagining another person, to be used along with other tools. It is not a window or a mirror.

Nigel Hamilton's justification for biographies that expose the private lives of public figures is somewhat more exalted. Hamilton is a former director of an outfit called the British Institute of Biography; he has taught courses on biography; and his works include a life of Field Marshal Montgomery (a revised edition came out in time to be titled "The Full Monty"), a controversial biography of the young John F. Kennedy ("JFK: Reckless Youth"), and a multi-volume biography of Bill Clinton, two volumes of which have appeared so far. His view, argued in "Biography: A Brief History" (Harvard; $21.95), is that biography—by which he means frank and unexpurgated representations of individual human beings in any medium, including paintings, movies, photographs, novels, supermarket tabloids, and the Biography Channel—is the genre of democracy. Biography is what the people want, the franker and more unexpurgated the better, and they will rise up and overthrow tyranny and hypocrisy in order to have it. The enemies of biography—censorship, libel laws, copyright protection, and postmodernist critical theory—are enemies of the people. They are on the wrong side of history.

The conviction that the history of biography is a reflection of the history of everything leads to some unlikely sentences. "With the British yoke undone in the American Revolution of 1776 and the overthrow of the *ancien régime* in the French Revolution of 1789, it was perhaps small wonder that the newly labeled art of autobiography was at the literary forefront of life depiction," for example; and, "Once the Japanese launched their air strike on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the fate of democracy lay no longer in critical, incisive biography but in the response of ordinary and extraordinary soldiers, sailors, and airmen."

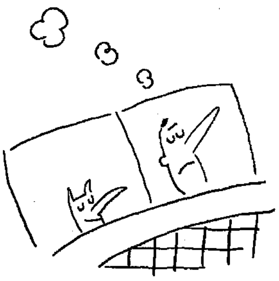
There is also this, about Albert Camus's novel "L'Étranger": "Portrayed with pitiless honesty as an existential, wholly ordinary, and unambitious character in a world without credible God, Camus' unromantic antihero won the author celebrity, the Nobel Prize, a collection of beautiful mistresses, and an early death while driving to meet three of the latter in Paris in 1960." (This is a classic of biographer's logic. Any number of men have had beautiful mistresses, lived in Paris, and died in a car crash, yet only one of them wrote "L'Étranger." So there is no reason to assume that "L'Étranger" is either explained by or explains good luck with mistresses and bad luck with cars. In a satisfying biography of Camus, however, his death will seem a death befitting the author of "L'Étranger.")

Still, Hamilton is right that people love biographies, and he is right about some of the reasons. We learn about ourselves by reading about the lives of other people, for one thing. And biographies of the powerful and the famous that humanize their subjects may play some kind of egalitarian social role. It's naïve, though, to suppose that the forces driving the appetite for "critical, incisive" (that is, highly revealing) biographies are all about democracy and demystification. Secrest is more to the point: people are prurient, and they like to lap up the gossip. People also enjoy judging other people's lives. They enjoy it excessively. It's not one of the species' more attractive addictions, and, on the whole, it's probably better to indulge it on the life of a person you have never met. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

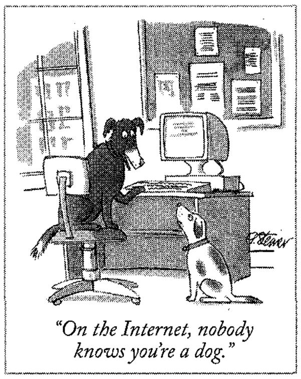
Loving Frank, *by Nancy Horan (Ballantine; $23.95).* In 1904, Frank Lloyd Wright started work on a house for an Oak Park couple, Edwin and Mamah Cheney, and, before long, he and Mamah had begun a scandalous affair. In her first novel, Horan, viewing the relationship from Mamah's perspective, does well to avoid serving up a bodice-ripper for the smart set. If anything, she cleaves too faithfully to the sources, occasionally giving her story the feel of a dissertation masquerading as a novel. But she succeeds in conveying the emotional center of her protagonist, whom she paints as a proto-feminist, an educated woman fettered by the role of bourgeois matriarch. Horan best evokes Mamah's troubled personality by means of delicately rendered reflections on the power of the natural world, from which her lover drew inspiration: watching her children rapturously observe a squirrel as it pulls apart wheat buds or taking pride in the way the house that Wright built for them in Wisconsin frames the landscape.

The Headmaster Ritual, *by Taylor Antrim (Mariner; $13.95).* Set at an exclusive Massachusetts private school, this début novel addresses the angst—both teen-age and adult—that percolates on a prep-school campus. Dyer Martin, in crisis after a disastrous foray into real estate, has taken a position in the history department; one of his pupils, James, is the timid son of the formidable headmaster, once tenured at Harvard and now determined to shake up the conservative and complacent privilege of his new domain. James and Dyer, beset by the outrages of bullies and the bewildering behavior of women, triumph, inevitably, over both. Like Curtis Sittenfeld in her novel "Prep," Antrim dwells on the rituals of boarding-school life—the rigid hierarchies, the code of silence that allows hazing to flourish—but he does not entirely succeed in illuminating the resonance of all this for his characters' interior lives.



Inside the Red Mansion, *by Oliver August (Houghton Mifflin; $26).* In 1999, China's Public Enemy No. 1 was "Fatty" Lai Changxing, an illiterate rice farmer turned real-estate and shipping mogul who fled the country, accused of heading a multibillion-dollar smuggling ring. This account, by a former Beijing bureau chief of the London *Times*, casts Lai's rise and fall as a cautionary tale of boomtown China. The author tours the remains of Lai's empire—a film studio built as a replica of the Forbidden City; a posh brothel where he bribed Party officials with the company of "Miss Temporarys"—but he reserves his most vivid prose for the "fakers and fortune seekers, oddballs and outlaws" he meets along the way: canny dance-hall girls, magnates of karaoke and foie gras, an "honesty doctor" who treats patients in a public park. His portraits are so lively that when Lai is finally arrested, at a casino in Niagara Falls, it's almost incidental.

The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit, *by Lucette Lagnado (Ecco; $25.95).* This memoir of an Egyptian Jewish family's gradual ruin is told without melodrama by its youngest survivor, now a reporter at the *Wall Street Journal.* Lagnado's story hinges on her father, "the Captain," who cut a dashing figure in mid-century Cairo, consorting with British officers and Egyptian royalty at French cafés while his family, neglected, stayed home. At first refusing to join the tide of Jews fleeing Egypt under the Nasser regime, the Captain finally yields, in 1963, when the family escapes to Paris and then Brooklyn. Deprived of wealth, status, and any means of coping, Lagnado's father fades, but he never loses his air of chivalry, manifested in a regular outflow of tiny checks to charitable causes—orphanages, vocational schools, and dowry funds for poor girls—overseas. "As if the Captain were capable of rescuing anyone," his daughter writes.



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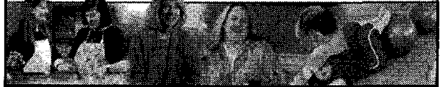

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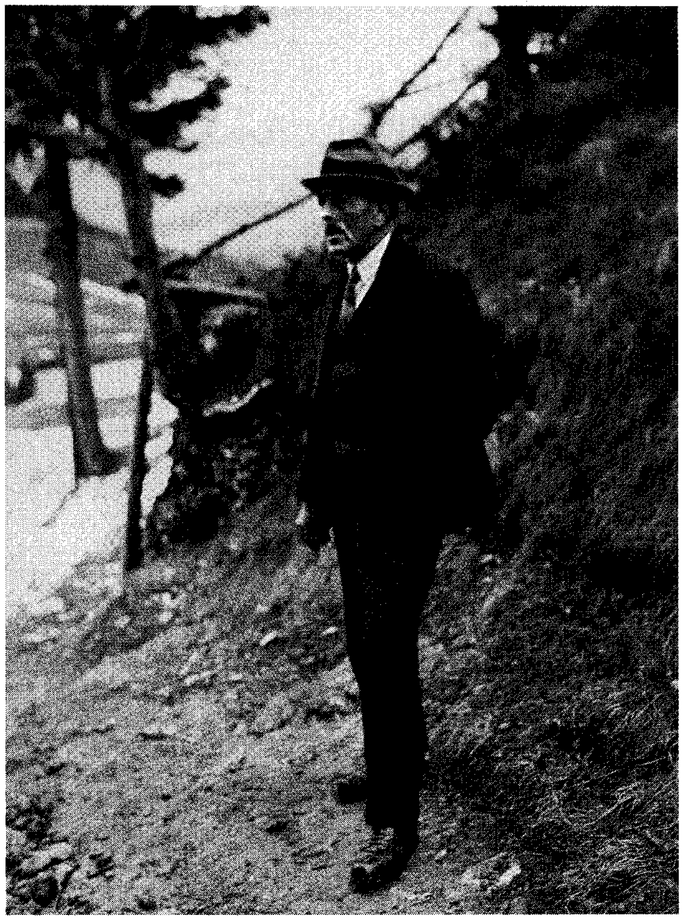
The fiction of Robert Walser.

BY BENJAMIN KUNKEL

In "Jakob von Gunten," the 1909 novel by the German-speaking Swiss writer Robert Walser, the hero adopts the motto "To be small and to stay small." The words apply just as well to Walser himself, whose life and work played out as a relentless diminuendo. The up-and-coming young novelist of the period before the First World War, capable of producing three novels in as many years, turned to shorter forms, and saw his audience and his income dwindle gradually through the war years and the nineteen-twenties. Once a fixture of smart Berlin society, Walser exchanged the world of salons for a series of tiny furnished rooms and, finally, in 1929, a mental institution. Even his handwriting diminished; he was able to squeeze a last novel—a short one, but still—onto just twenty-four sides of octavo-size paper. For years, some scholars believed that the script in which Walser composed this novel, "The Robber," and many other later works was an uncrackable private code, and not until 1972, fifteen years after his death, did transcriptions from the so-called *Bleistiftgebiet,* or "pencil area," begin to appear. The publication, starting in the eighties, of six volumes of painstakingly transcribed texts brought to light some of Walser's most beautiful and haunting writing, and reinforced his posthumous reputation in German. The incredible shrinking writer is a major twentieth-century prose artist who, for all that the modern world seems to have passed him by, fulfills the modern criterion: he sounds like nobody else.



Walser hiking in 1937, some years after he stopped writing entirely.

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In Walser's case, this means that he achieved a remarkable tone, in which perfect assurance and perfect ambiguity combine. His narrators are all ostensibly humble, courteous, and cheerful; the puzzle lies in deciding where they are speaking in earnest and where ironically. Three of Walser's four surviving novels are now available in English, along with several collections of stories quarried by various translators—most notably Christopher Middleton and Susan Bernofsky—from the ten volumes of short prose that Walser published during his lifetime, and the deep trove of deciphered microscripts. The most recently translated novel, "The Assistant" (New Directions; translated by Bernofsky; $16.95), abounds in declarations like "How tasty the coffee was again today." No irony there—and you can read a lot of Walser without finding a single mention of food, drink, weather, clothing, architecture, or cigars that is not entirely appreciative. Joseph, the assistant, also enjoys swimming on his days off: "What swimming person, provided he is not about to drown, can help being in excellent spirits?" The proviso about drowning introduces a dark flutter of ambiguity, but, generally speaking, Walser's narrators claim to be in excellent spirits even when they *are* drowning: "Of course, I like sorrow very much as well, it's very valuable, very." Sometimes Walser seems a sort of saint of cosmic compliance. At other times, in his good-natured acceptance of all things, he appears to be mocking the very possibility of such an attitude: "I only know that all the poor people work in the factory, perhaps as a punishment for being so poor." Indeed, the Walser tone, hovering between beatific quietism and a burlesque of conventionality, is detectable in the immortal reply he gave a man who visited him at an asylum and asked about his writing: "I am not here to write, but to be mad."

The seventh of eight children, Robert Walser was born in Biel, Switzerland, on April 15, 1878. On his mother's side were peasants and artisans, and, on his father's, pastors, including, in his grandfather, a frankly utopian social reformer whose activism cost him his clerical collar and inspired reactionaries to fire shots at his windows. The grandfather kept the bullets as souvenirs, and may also have passed on some of his politics to his grandson; Walser several times sketches a utopia of freedom and equality which seems to have arrived not by revolution but, in very Swiss fashion, through a sort of universal politeness and consideration.

Walser's father was a struggling bookbinder, though it is his mother, Elisa, who seems to have loomed larger. According to Catherine Sauvat, Walser's French biographer (there is also a German biography, by Robert Mächler), Elisa Walser's periods of depressive withdrawal were often followed by bouts of rage in which she reproached her children either for tormenting her or for ignoring her. Despite a household climate of financial insecurity and mental illness, the Walser siblings were a lively and talented brood who took great pleasure in one another's company; by far Robert's closest friends in life were his brother Karl and his sister Lisa. Still, given that not one of six boys and two girls became a parent, it's hard not to suspect the enduring presence of some shared childhood unhappiness. The eldest brother died at fifteen; the other siblings became teachers (one of whom preceded Walser to the Waldau mental institution, and another of whom committed suicide), an artist, a banker, the wife of a matchstick-company manager, and—in Robert himself—a writer who can seem a reductio ad absurdum of the good child: cheerful and polite in all circumstances and ready to see the justice of any punishment he receives.

The family could not afford to send Robert to school past the age of fourteen, and before devoting himself to writing he worked as a clerk at a bank, in an elastics factory, and for a luckless inventor. He also attended an academy for servants and was briefly a butler in a Silesian castle. Walser put all of this to use in his writing, and, as a novelist, he can be placed in that comic tradition of European clerking fiction that runs from Gogol through Kafka and down to José Saramago. However, unlike Kafka—who admired "Jakob von Gunten" and whose own first book was hailed by Robert Musil as "a special case of the Walser type"—Walser did not find it possible to hold down a job and write at the same time. His frustration with clerkly existence is evident in the deadpan story "Job Application":

> Esteemed Gentlemen,
>
> I am a poor, young, unemployed person in the business field, my name is Wenzel, I am seeking a suitable position, and I take the liberty of asking you, nicely and politely, if perhaps in your airy, bright, amiable rooms such a position might be free. . . . Large and difficult tasks I cannot perform, and obligations of a far-reaching sort are too strenuous for my mind. I am not particularly clever, and first and foremost I do not like to strain my intelligence overmuch. . . . Assuredly there exists in your extensive institution, which I imagine to be overflowing with main and subsidiary functions and offices, work of the kind that one can do as in a dream?—I am, to put it frankly, a Chinese; that is to say, a person who deems everything small and modest to be beautiful and pleasing, and to whom all that is big and exacting is fearsome and horrid.

The passage shows the tightness of Walser's switchbacks from sweetness to sarcasm and back to sweetness again. It also offhandedly announces his credo—everything small and modest is beautiful and pleasing—and establishes the depth of his affinity with Kafka. After all, Kafka in one of his letters makes the same curious declaration—"Indeed I am a Chinese"—and cherished the idea of smallness in a similar way: "Two possibilities: making oneself infinitely small, or being so." For both writers, smallness implied a drastic aversion to power, the exercise of it as well as submission to it. And Walser's notion of smallness came to enfold the entire world. In a late sketch, he is still dreaming of China:

> Nobody there is so foolish as to believe himself better than his fellow beings. I think of the Chinese as people polite and happy in equal measure, as friendly as they are helpful. There, modesty is the crowning glory of sentiment. . . . China is teeming with people, but nobody vexes anyone. . . . The human traffic is like an ocean.

In 1904, when Walser was twenty-six, he saw his first book published, a collection of essays on everything and nothing by the fictional naïf Fritz Kocher. Among Kocher's observations are that leaves fall to the ground in autumn, that country fairs are useful and pleasant, and that "more people perish than want to." Walser had assembled the essays over several years, while working intermittently in and around Zurich and Bern, and once they had appeared between two covers he felt emboldened to move to Berlin and seek his fortune there.

In Berlin, he moved in with his brother Karl (a notable illustrator and stage-set designer) and attempted to live by his pen. He didn't do badly at first, and his literary success, along with his brother's connections, secured him a place in German artistic circles, where he was sometimes governed by an imp of the perverse. As adolescents, he and Karl had apparently perfected the art of perching in a high window and throwing their hats onto the heads of passersby, and their mischief persisted in adulthood. One evening at a party, they challenged the famous playwright Frank Wedekind to a bout of *Hosenlupf* (literally, "trouser-hoist"), a Swiss wrestling variant that makes inventive use of an opponent's waistband. When Wedekind, discomfited, fled to a café, his tormentors pursued him, hailing him with friendly, if cryptic, cries of "Muttonhead!" and causing him to get caught up in a revolving door. On another occasion, in a literary salon, Walser interrupted the high-flown talk by seizing a young Englishwoman's leg and praising her small feet.

This sort of behavior made Walser stand out in Berlin, as did his Swiss-German dialect and his lack of formal education. And his acquaintances—he had few friends and, it seems, in the course of his life, not a single lover of either sex—were thereby confronted with the same question as his readers: where did innocence and joy end and playacting begin? In later years, stung by his failure to be taken seriously as a writer, Walser claimed that the ingenuousness was just an act: "My vocation, my mission, consists mainly in making every effort to keep my audience believing that I am truly simple. I give them the illusion that unspoiledness and naïveté still exist." But it can be hard to tell. When Walser met Lenin in Zurich, during the war, all he had to say was "So you, too, like fruitcake?"

"The Assistant," which was written in Berlin a hundred years ago, in a six-week sprint, and appeared in 1908, is only Walser's second published novel, and here his innocence seems more truly innocent than is sometimes the case. Told from the point of view of Joseph, an impoverished young clerk who joins the employ and the household of a precariously solvent inventor named Tobler, the story might be defined in terms of the intersection of two motions: the daily up and down of Joseph's moods, and the relentless decline of his master's fortunes. Joseph, "a passionate smoker," puffs on Herr Tobler's cheroots and consumes Tobler's food with the relish of a man who has known hunger. He also likes taking walks in the woods and chatting up Tobler's mercurial wife. Joseph's more anxious moods arrive when he fears that he will lose access to these pleasures, either because Tobler goes broke or because his own tendency to do "stupid things"—he sometimes has the cheek to address his betters as their equal—gets him fired:

> "Could it be possible for me to live without doing stupid things? And in this household I do them so splendidly. . . . And how can I think of existing without drinking Herr Tobler's coffee? . . . And in whose neatly covered and turned-down beds do I intend to go to sleep afterwards? No doubt beneath the arches of some cozy bridge!"

"The Assistant" is full of such pell-mell soliloquies, and it's no wonder that Walser soon abandoned third-person narration for the more congenial mode of the monologue. The aspect of his style already perfected here is the beautiful abstractness of his descriptions: "Autumn was arriving, everything appeared to be sitting down, somewhere something was coming to a standstill, nature seemed at times to be rubbing its eyes." When Herr Tobler flies into drunken hysterics, we are told, "Masculine and human rationality was now bawling and jeering and babbling."

Walser's clerks and layabouts are perhaps the nicest, most considerate people you can meet in modernist fiction, but they can also be cuttingly ironic in the way of only the very polite: that "cozy" bridge to sleep under, that "masculine and human" rationality. Susan Bernofsky reproduces this effect and others with impressive fluency and naturalness, and she must also have enjoyed dusting off words like "swillpot" and "thunderation." It's only too bad that, for want of such a translation, Virginia Woolf never learned that the desire she expressed in her 1919 essay "Modern Fiction" for a more impressionistic and less narrowly empirical modern novel, a novel of floating sensibility rather than fixed characters, had been, to such a remarkable degree, anticipated a dozen years earlier by a Swiss writer living in Berlin.

Something else Woolf wrote in her essay seems to apply to Walser: "If a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work on his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style." To this Walser adds a certain specification of what it would mean to be a free man. After all, for Herr Tobler and his wife, there *is* a love interest (their marriage) and a catastrophe (their bankruptcy); for their assistant Joseph there is neither. And Joseph doesn't need the disciplined temperament of a successful entrepreneur, since he isn't trying to be one. He can simply decline to be yelled at anymore and, as he does on the last page of the book, walk off down the hill: no paycheck, but no debts, either. If Joseph seems remarkably unconcerned about where his future wages will come from, this may be because "The Assistant" describes the last serious job that Walser held before moving to Berlin. The book is a covert *Künstlerroman*, its hero on his way to becoming an artist.

"Jakob von Gunten" is Walser's next Berlin novel—and a masterpiece, not least of ambiguity. Jakob has enrolled in a school for servants in order to learn humility, an effort that seems, at first, to be imposed by necessity, since, despite his aristocratic surname, Jakob is almost penniless and needs to make a living somehow: "As an old man I shall have to serve young and confident and badly educated ruffians, or I shall be a beggar, or I shall perish." Later, his attitude is more complicated:

> If I were rich, I wouldn't travel around the world. To be sure, that would not be so bad. But I can see nothing wildly exciting about getting a fugitive acquaintance with foreign places. In general I would decline to educate myself, as they say, any further. I would be attracted by deep things and by the soul, rather than by distances and things far off. . . . And I wouldn't buy anything either. I would make no acquisitions. . . . I would walk about on foot, just as usual, with the consciously secret intention of not letting people notice very much how regally rich I am. . . . It would never occur to me to take a cab. Only people who are in a hurry or want to put on noble airs do that. But I wouldn't want to put on noble airs, and I would be in no hurry whatever.

You can read this passage several times without figuring out whether it constitutes a declaration of the sublimest contentment, given that Jakob's fantasy of wealth is identical to the reality of his poverty, or whether Walser is saying something else—that only a rich man could enjoy the simple life, since only then would simplicity be his free choice.

So it is reading Walser: you catch a glimpse of real spiritual nobility, and then wonder whether the very idea of such a thing—spiritual nobility, in a world of rich and poor—isn't meant as a sarcastic joke.

What's beyond doubt is that Walser spent a good deal of his life on foot and in no hurry. Homesickness and poverty compelled him back to Switzerland in 1913, and, in the next decade and a half, he seems to have been out walking whenever he was not at his desk or asleep in bed. From now on, Walser concentrated on short prose, and it is tempting to suppose that his prodigious rambling contributed to the style of his later stories. "Stories," in fact, is not the word for these feuilletonistic flights of prose; they are squibs, sketches, anecdotes, essays, fantasies, or an unstable compound of all those. It's remarkable to see what variety and richness, what easiness and charm, what winsome inanities and philosophical depths he could pack into half a page of one late sketch alone, as in "Boat Trip":

> Odd similarities between things at rest and things flowing occurred to me during the trip that I, too, participated in, and I would have been delighted to have been as fascinating a storyteller as one person there, who was asked to invent a tale so that the outing not become boring. . . . Here and there fish, driven it seemed by an uncontrollable curiosity, bobbed upward from the depths to visibility, as though wishing to help the listeners be satisfied with the tale. On fish one finds no arms. Is that why they have such huge eyes and expressive mouths? Is it because they have no legs that they make the best swimmers? . . . A girl sitting with us in the boat compared traveling over the water to the imperceptible gliding and progress of growth, that of fruit for example, which perhaps would have little desire to ripen if it knew to what end.

In his "Essay on Freedom," Walser seems to be describing at once his own nature and the mode of his later prose: "Freedom wants both to be understood and to be almost continuously not understood; it wants to be seen and then again to be as if it were not there." Tempting as it is to wring one's hands over the philistine reading public that was not eager to sponsor Walser in the growing freedom of his writing, really it's remarkable that the editors of ordinary newspapers—one of whom received threats of cancelled subscriptions unless the "nonsense" stopped—published any of this work at all. In the end, not surprisingly, they were unwilling to run much more of it. Walser could afford to rent only the meanest of furnished rooms, one of which a visitor inventoried thus: "There was only a bed, a table, and a chair. A cheap map of Europe was tacked to the wall." As his public grew smaller, Walser began to compose much of his work, in his almost indecipherably tiny and abbreviated script, without any expectation of publication; but we should not conclude from this that he didn't care about recognition. In being understood and almost continually not understood, both parts were important, and one of the threads holding together "The Robber," written in 1925, is the Walser figure's concern with his reception as a writer and as a person: "Local men of the world call me a simpleton because novels don't tumble out of my pockets." "The Robber" itself, more an assemblage of passages than a novel in any ordinary sense, did not tumble into the world until 1972—a fitting date for a beautiful, unsummarizable work every bit as self-reflexive as anything produced by the metafictionists of the sixties and seventies.

In 1929, Walser was brought by his sister Lisa to the Waldau mental institution, in Bern (where their brother Ernst, given a diagnosis of schizophrenia, had lived for eighteen years, until his death, in 1916). To be sure, Walser was not quite normal psychologically, and his later work can sometimes be reminiscent of the alternately friendly and menacing private universes elaborated by other institutionalized "outsider artists." But he seems to have suffered more from unhappiness, isolation, and poverty than from anything else. Neither the admitting doctor's report nor the testimony of those who met and spoke with Walser during his last decades render his diagnosis of schizophrenia very persuasive. Walser's brothers Karl and Oscar believed that he simply preferred life at Waldau to life outside (and for that reason ultimately refused to contribute to his keep). They were probably right: Walser could now devote himself to writing without having to worry about earning a living, while the presence of others relieved him of some portion of his solitude. Rather than take his own room, Walser chose to sleep, barracks style, among the other inmates, though his taste for company did not extend to conversation. One of his last prose pieces describes a pretty girl who steadfastly rebuffs all offers of dinner, gondola rides, and flowers; she prefers to sit alone in the sun, "luxuriating in the simplicity of her wants."

Walter Benjamin, in an essay from 1929, made the ingenious suggestion that Walser's cheerful people must all be convalescents; only recovered health could explain the intense pleasure they take in absolutely everything. More recently, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben offered a gloss on the flatness, the thus-ness, of Walser's frequently very matter-of-fact prose: this, he says, is how the world of left-behind objects and people will look after the Messiah has come and gone, abandoned in what Agamben calls the Irreparable. That works, too, for much of Walser's writing, though it doesn't cover the ironic moments. In these, it truly seems as if Walser has been laid under a curse: permitted only to speak well of the world, he is forced to express any sorrow or rage he feels in terms of the most unequivocal praise. The resulting sense of torment, endlessness, and absurdity puts one in mind of Kafka again.

In 1933, Waldau came under new management and Walser was moved to another asylum. He did not protest this plan at first, but when the day came he refused to get out of bed and had to be taken away by force. In the new asylum, in Herisau, in his native canton of Appenzell, Walser received visits from a man of letters named Carl Seelig, who oversaw the reissue of some of Walser's work and made a record of his conversations with the writer. It was Seelig to whom Walser said that his role was no longer to write but to be mad, and he also gave Seelig what might be taken as an explanation for his abandonment of writing following his forcible transfer: "The only ground on which a writer can produce is that of freedom." For several years, Seelig petitioned for Walser's release, but without success, and Walser remained an inmate of the Herisau asylum until he died, out on one of his long walks, on Christmas Day, 1956. Someone had the sang-froid to snap a photograph: footprints in the snow lead to a tall man lying with one arm thrown behind his head, for all the world as if his last gesture had been to toss off the hat that lies a few feet away. ♦

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THE SKY LINE

TOWERS OF BABBLE

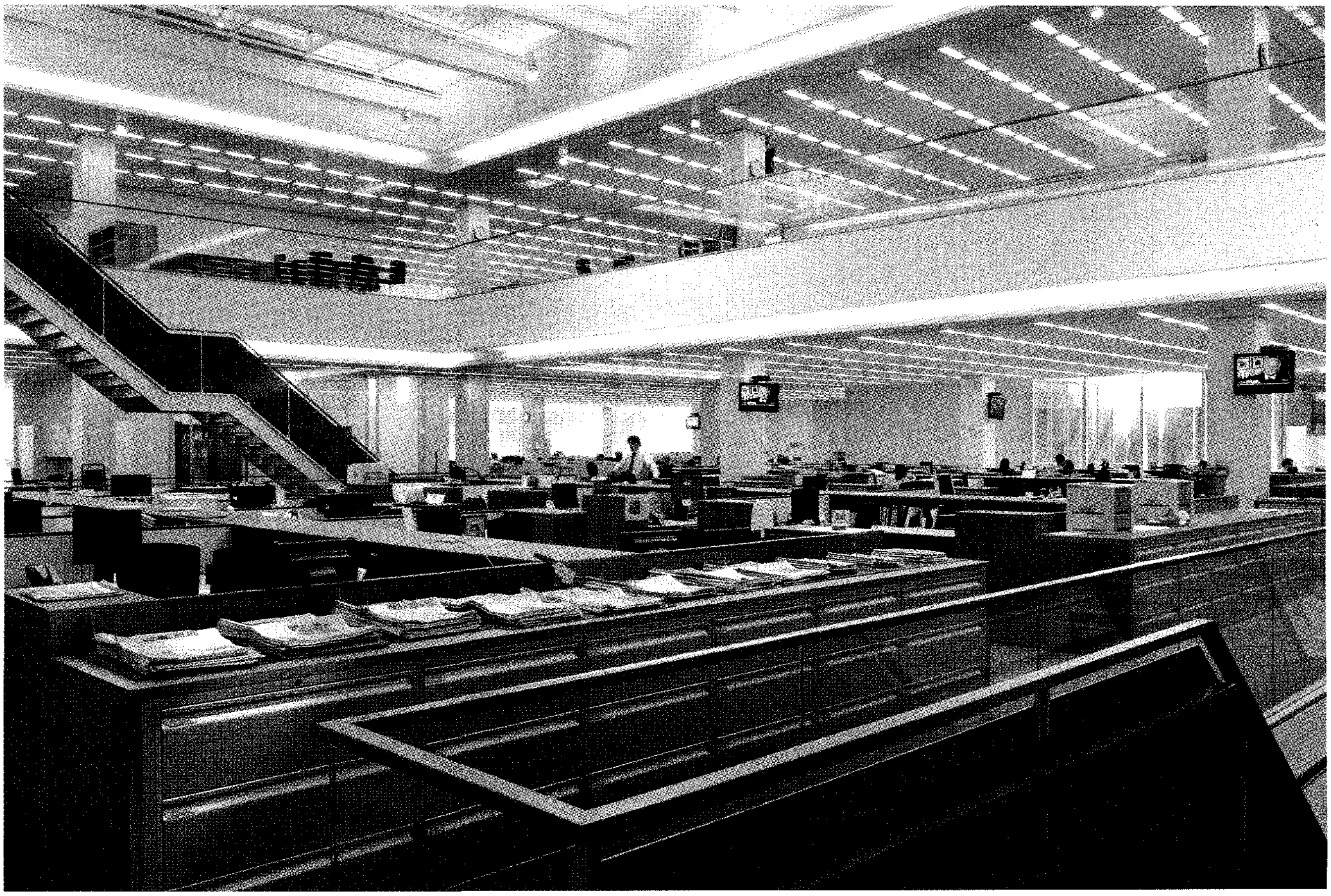
What should a newsroom look like in the twenty-first century?

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

In 1999, when Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., the chairman of the *Times*, was laying plans for a new headquarters, it was becoming nearly impossible to produce a newspaper in the rambling headquarters on Forty-third Street. The building was originally designed around the gargantuan printing presses that filled the basements and the delivery trucks that lined up in front. Writers and editors worked upstairs, in a crowded newsroom with few of the amenities of a conventional office. At one time—when it was filled with metal desks and clacking typewriters, the smell of ink and cigarettes and the yelling of city editors—this might have bestowed the kind of old-time newspaper mystique associated with plays and movies like "The Front Page." But in the mid-seventies, with the first of a series of awkward attempts to adapt to the demands of the computer era, the noisy, competitive atmosphere began to dissolve. The deadline bells and the shouts of "Copy!" faded, and soon the newsroom felt more like the back office of an insurance company than like the nerve center of a great newspaper.

The tradition of having reporters and editors in one big space, called a newsroom or city room, arose largely because it was the easiest way to put out a newspaper on deadline. The fastest communication was face to face, and in a newsroom everybody could watch the same clocks, use the same news tickers, and keep an eye on one another. Everything depended on the flow of paper; in the old *Times* building, the Linotype machines were right above the newsroom, so that copyboys would only have to run up a single flight of stairs to deliver copy to the typesetters. Stories moved through the building in physical form, from paper to type to print, like an assembly line. Now, of course, stories are electronic blips, and page images are transferred in an instant to printing plants around the country. Almost none of the conditions that led to the creation of newsrooms still prevail.

So Sulzberger decided to start from scratch—something the *Times* hadn't done since 1904, when Sulzberger's great-grandfather Adolph S. Ochs put up the Times Tower in Longacre Square, at Broadway and Seventh Avenue. The building became an icon—soon after it opened, Longacre Square was renamed Times Square—but it was also impractically narrow and, within a decade, Ochs had to put up another building half a block away, which, presumably to save



In the new Times newsroom, sleekness and sophistication bring with them a certain chill. Photograph by David S. Allee.

face, was called the Annex. Eventually, the entire operation moved into the Annex, and there it remained until earlier this summer, when it moved into a new tower.

Sulzberger, in building his tower, has been more methodical and less imperial than his ancestor. Having picked a site on Eighth Avenue, across from the Port Authority Bus Terminal, the *Times* joined forces with a real-estate developer, Forest City Ratner, and held a design competition. In the fall of 2000, the *Times* selected Renzo Piano, one of the world's most eminent architects. Piano, in partnership with the New York firm of FXFowle, designed a fifty-two-story tower of metal and glass, with screens of small ceramic rods running up the façade to make the building shimmer. The ceramic screens rise higher than the roof by about ninety feet, forming a light, ephemeral crown. Piano said that he wanted the tower to look as if it disappeared into the air, and while it doesn't quite do that—in part because of its steely, battleship-gray color—it has a tensile elegance that sets it apart from every other skyscraper in Manhattan.

For the reporters and editors, the most notable feature of Piano's design was his decision to put most of them in a structure known as the Podium, a separate, four-story glass wing behind the tower, facing onto a courtyard of moss and birch trees. Those involved with the building have made much of how apt a glass-enclosed building is to the openness at the heart of the journalistic mission. That seems a bit of a stretch—rapacious corporations and secretive government agencies like glass buildings, too—but clearly Piano, by making the newsroom a distinct architectural element, has tried to give reporters and editors pride of place. Inside, however, the newsroom feels enormous and austere, with a kind of corporate coolness. The interior was designed by the architectural firm Gensler, and it fails to emulate either the unusual quality of the building's exterior or the amiable rambunctiousness of an old-style newsroom. With its sea of cubicles partitioned by wood-veneer cabinets, it is vastly more sophisticated than any workplace the *Times* has ever had, but sleekness has brought a certain chill (though the effect will be pleasanter when the birch trees go into the still unfinished courtyard). You also don't get much sense that anyone has really rethought the idea of the newsroom in the electronic age. Ultimately, it's hard not to sense that the *Times*, so determined to have a building that makes a mark on the sky line, had a failure of nerve when it came to the interior.

Many of the reporters I spoke to didn't think much of their new digs. Journalists, of course, love to grouse, but they also don't like to be regimented, and just about every single workspace here is identical. In a nice, democratic gesture, most of the building's perimeter has been left open, bringing in lots of natural light, and the private offices for editors all have glass walls facing into the newsroom. One member of the editorial board, who gave up a large, enclosed office in the old building for one of these small fishbowls, growled to me, "There's no place I can change into a tuxedo." Undermining the egalitarian topography, Bill Keller, the executive editor, has rigged up a screen of frosted glass inside his office so that he can't be seen from the newsroom when he sits at his desk.

To see a newsroom truly designed for the electronic age, you have to head across town, to the headquarters of Bloomberg L.P., on Lexington Avenue, which was completed two years ago. If the *Times* newsroom is an unadventurous space hidden within an architecturally important building, Bloomberg is the opposite: a dazzling work environment tucked inside a refined but conventional skyscraper, designed by Cesar Pelli. Bloomberg, working with Studios Architecture and the design firm Pentagram, has produced a workspace that could not have existed ten years ago. No one, not even the chairman and the chief executive, has a private office. Instead, some four thousand employees sit in uniform rows at identical, white-topped desks bearing custom-built Bloomberg flat-panel computer terminals. Although the desk of the C.E.O., Lex Fenwick, is larger and is set slightly apart—"I am not wholly pure," he told me—he sits just a few feet from the young employees who handle customer inquiries and complaints. "I wanted to make the point that we are a customer-service business above all," he said. Large, flat-panel monitors hang from the ceilings, flashing constantly updated numbers: how many customer-service people are working at that moment, how many calls they have answered, how long it's taking to answer the average call that day.

The most distinctive part of the office is a large central atrium, known as the Link, which overlooks a cylindrical courtyard at the base of Pelli's tower. The cylinder narrows toward the top, and so the Link's walls slant outward, making the most of the architectural quirk. A gathering place, with free snacks available all day to employees, the space gives an impression of maximal fluidity; it feels less like an office lobby than like the Palm Court of the Plaza, reconfigured for the computer age, when no one has time to sit down. Long screens, elaborately designed by Pentagram, relay news, market data, and other information. Elevators send all visitors and most staff members there first, and from there you can get to other floors on escalators, including one between the fifth and sixth floors that glides in a graceful curve.

Bloomberg, having started as a provider of financial data to corporate clients, is now a major news organization, whose radio stations, television studios, and significant online presence are all closely integrated. The workers are in much closer quarters than those at the *Times*, and you might expect the atmosphere to be one of a sweatshop, but sweatshops don't usually have rotating displays of contemporary sculpture or the tanks of tropical fish that are a feature of Bloomberg's bid for corporate cool. All in all, the Bloomberg newsroom is one of the most exhilarating workspaces I've ever seen, with both the high energy of a trading floor (where the Bloomberg products are consumed) and the buzz of the newsrooms of old. And, as with those newsrooms, visibility is key to the effect. On every floor, there are glass-enclosed conference rooms, couches for impromptu meetings, and even a series of small, glass-walled rooms for private one-on-ones—but you are always visible. Or almost always. Tucked away on a lower floor are a pair of tiny windowless, fabric-lined rooms where employees can retreat, presumably when the pressure of visibility becomes too much for them. With soft, glowing lights set into the floor, the room is a reminder that all this exuberance has its price, even if the snacks are free. ♦

THE ART WORLD

MODERN LOVE

Gerald and Sara Murphy at work and at play.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

"Making It New: The Art and Style of Sara & Gerald Murphy," at the Williams College Museum of Art, in Williamstown, Massachusetts, is an immensely satisfying show about fine, complicated people who loved life in exemplary ways, in superb company, and suffered misfortune. It is also an art show that centers on seven paintings by Gerald, all that remain of the fourteen he is known to have made in the nineteen-twenties. (The others were lost, owing largely to his own indifference.) In addition, there is work by Picasso, Léger, Gris, and other modern masters whom the Murphys befriended, supported, and, at times, inspired. Without it, tales of Gerald and Sara, moderately wealthy and irrepressibly sociable Jazz Age American expatriates in France, would be mainly deluxe gossip, filtered through their friend F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Tender Is the Night," in which they figure as the charismatic Dick and Nicole Diver. Their story was vivified by Calvin Tomkins in his 1962 *New Yorker* Profile and later book, "Living Well Is the Best Revenge," and by Amanda Vaill in her 1998 biography, "Everybody Was So Young." Tomkins and Vaill are among the ten essayists in the show's catalogue, who, led by the curator Deborah Rothschild, neglect no aspect of Murphyana, including the long-veiled sidelight of Gerald's homosexuality. Usually, I'm unbeguiled by the rich and glamorous, and I attended "Making It New" in a resisting mood. Then I looked.

Gerald's paintings are a gold standard that backs, with creative integrity, the paper money of the couple's legend. He started by assisting on sets for Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, with quick lessons from the painter Natalia Goncharova. His work consists of crisply hard-edged, cunningly composed, subtly colored, semi-abstract pictures of machinery, common objects, architectural fragments, and, in a disturbing final image, a wasp battening on a pear. Numerous influences are plain, but Gerald jumped ahead of his time with a laconic style that was prescient of big-scale abstraction and of Pop art. (If one of the lost paintings, "Boatdeck"—a sensation at the 1924 Salon des Indépendants, in Paris—had survived, it surely would be an icon of modernism. Eighteen feet high by twelve wide, it billboarded transatlantic cultural intercourse with a tremendous image of ocean-liner structures.) "Watch" (1925), depicting clockwork, achieves a spankingly representational translation of Cubism. "Razor" (1924), which monumentalizes a safety razor, a fountain pen, and a matchbox, might enable future archeologists to reimagine the essential theory and practice of modern art, should every other example perish. It is by a man who wasn't really an artist.

Gerald's father owned Mark Cross, the luxury-goods business; Sara's was a printing magnate. Gerald's family was Irish Catholic, from Boston; Sara's a union of Norwegian and pedigreed American, from Illinois. They met at a party in East Hampton, in 1904, when she was twenty-one and he sixteen. Friendship became romance after his graduation from Yale, where he was popular but unhappy. She seems to have taken in stride his confessed attraction to men, which he strove to suppress. They married in 1915 and soon had a girl and two boys. Gerald volunteered for military service not quite in time to fight in the First World War. He then studied landscape architecture at Harvard. William James, Jr., the son of the philosopher, painted Sara's portrait—an astonishingly lovely and telling picture, which is in the show. In June of 1921, the culturally ambitious Murphys decamped for England. By September, they were in Paris, where they found old friends, notably Cole Porter, and plunged into circles of the avant-garde, primarily that of the Russians around Diaghilev and Stravinsky. Picasso, having married the ballerina Olga Khokhlova, was a frequent presence. To celebrate the première of Stravinsky's ballet "Les Noces," in 1923, Gerald and Sara threw a fabled all-night party on a barge on the Seine. The same year, Gerald and Porter collaborated on a riotously successful jazz ballet, "Within the Quota," a burlesque on American culture.

Porter and his wife, Linda, had introduced the Murphys to Antibes, a resort where, at the time, few people stayed in the summer. In 1923, they bought a seaside chalet, dubbed Villa America, and helped to change that. They hosted the Picassos and close to everybody else who counted in adventurous art and literature. American visitors included Man Ray, Archibald MacLeish, Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, and, of most consequence, Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. (For the atmospherics of Villa America, consult the incandescent opening pages of "Tender Is the Night.") Anecdotes abound. Questions linger. Did Picasso bed Sara? That sturdy rumor is probably untrue, though the artist was smitten, as were many other men. Sara's features are suggested in certain of his "neoclassical" paintings—"Woman Seated in an Armchair" (1923) gives dazzling evidence in the show—but Picasso was on a break, at the time, from being obsessed with particular women. His masterpiece involving the Murphys, "The Pipes of Pan" (1923), was based on a photograph of himself clowning on the beach with a stiffly posing Gerald.

Two things intrigue me in accounts of the Murphys' conduct. One is how effectively Gerald concealed his sexual ambivalence. Even his sophisticated intimates Fitzgerald and Hemingway seem uncertain, though Hemingway had occasion to deplore a shifty unreliability, compounded of guilt and fear, at Gerald's core. (His gradual disaffection became outright cruelty in "A Moveable Feast," where he sneered at "the understanding rich.") Also striking is the fact that Gerald and Sara collected only American folk art. The abnegation bespeaks a will to remain participants in, rather than patrons of, the creative life. Their expressive means included decorative flair (white walls and black satin in the villa) and wit (Sara wore her pearls to the beach because, she explained, they wanted sunning). Rothschild writes that Gerald

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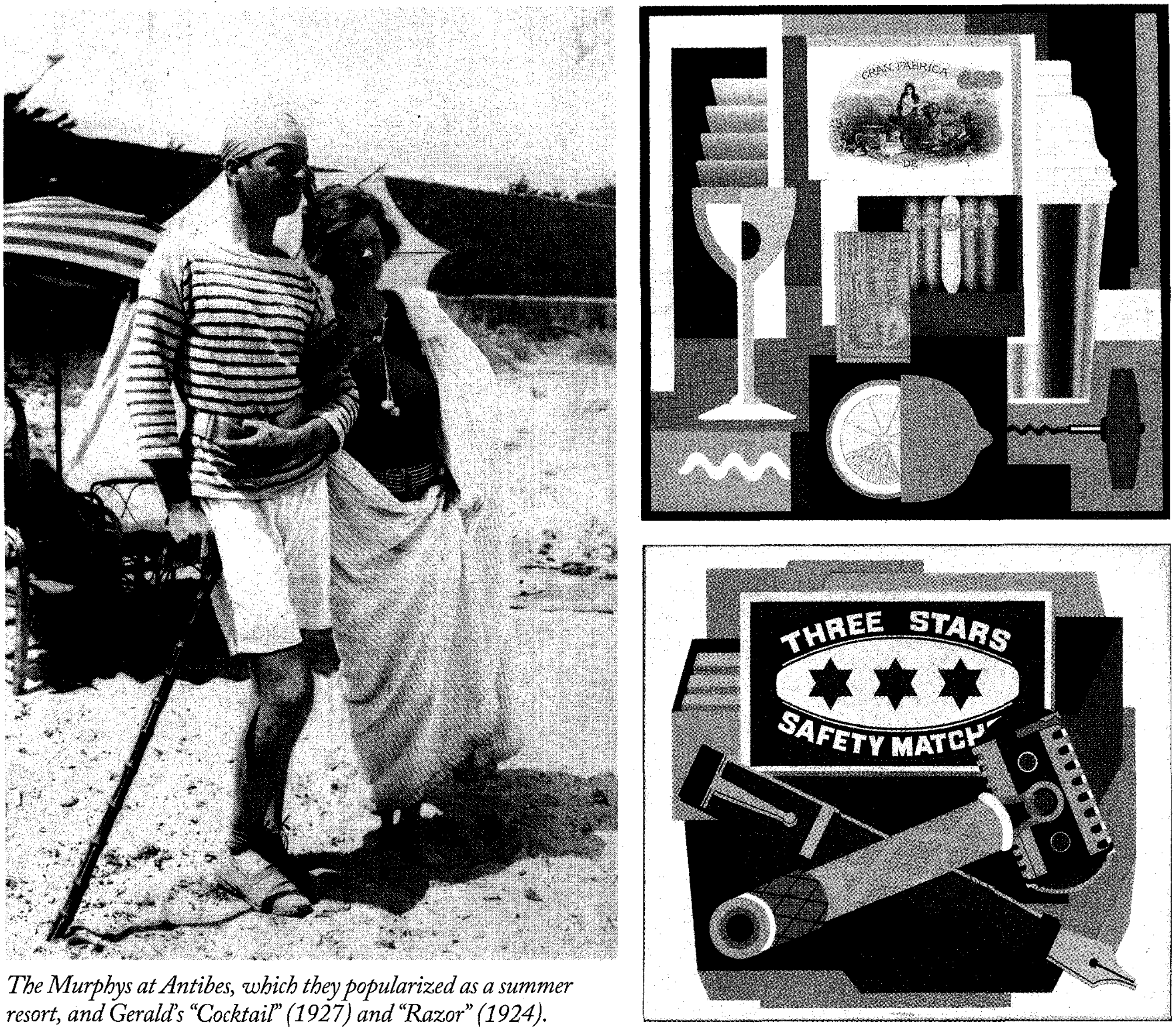


The Murphys at Antibes, which they popularized as a summer resort, and Gerald's "Cocktail" (1927) and "Razor" (1924).

"meticulously planned, intellectualized, and expended great effort in order to make each moment a beautiful event."

The idyll disintegrated in 1929, owing to financial setbacks and, most gravely, the onset of their younger son Patrick's fatal tuberculosis. Amid years of frantic efforts to save Patrick, their other son, Baoth, died suddenly, of meningitis; both boys were gone by 1937. The family had returned to America, where Gerald took over Mark Cross, then on the brink of bankruptcy, and, grudgingly, spent the rest of his working life preserving it. The hospitality of their home in Snedens Landing, just up the Hudson from New York City, seems to have been a sweet but pale afterimage of their former salon. (Sara instructed Calvin Tomkins in the right way to drink champagne—with eyes raised to the trees above.) Gerald had all but closed an iron door on the memory of his meteoric painting career when, in 1960, the Dallas Museum for Contemporary Arts mounted a revival. He later remarked, "I've been discovered. What does one wear?" The seven paintings and the odd minor work on paper, seen together, really do project a career, which was strongest at the start. The grotesquerie of "Wasp and Pear" (1929), with its hints of psychic turmoil, may have been a gambit to check a slide into overly exquisite effects. At any rate, it's unlikely that Gerald, had he continued, would have improved. What he used in his art, he used up.

The Murphys served Fitzgerald as symbols of the great theme of the Lost Generation: romantic disappointment, given intensity by the majesty of the dreams at stake. Gerald seemed to concur in a letter to Fitzgerald in 1935, praising "Tender Is the Night." (Sara hated the book.) He wrote, "Only the invented part of our life—the unreal part—has had any scheme, any beauty." But this came amid the trauma of Baoth's death. ("Life itself has stepped in now and blundered, scarred, and destroyed.") In fact, Gerald and Sara lived well, with dignity, from start to finish. The most revelatory and moving item in the show for me is a letter from Zelda Fitzgerald, following Scott's death, in 1940. She writes that Scott's love of the Murphys reflected a "devotion to those that he felt were contributing to the aesthetic and spiritual purposes of life." There is a world of excitement and woe in that conflation of the aesthetic and the spiritual. It's a madness, which life will punish. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

More paintings and photographs, plus Calvin Tomkins's 1962 Profile.

THE CURRENT CINEMA

WAR WOUNDS

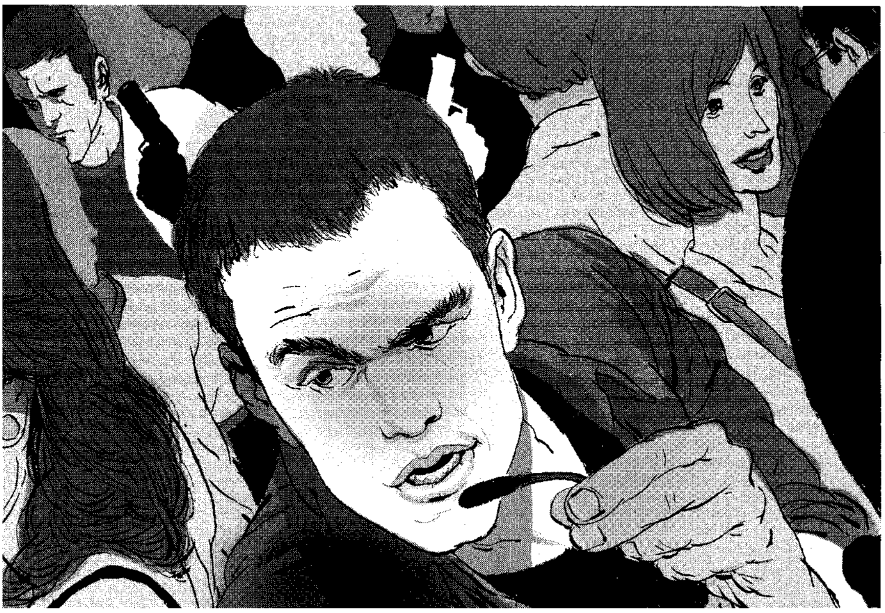
"The Bourne Ultimatum" and "No End in Sight."

BY DAVID DENBY

Matt Damon, at least in the "Bourne" series, looks like a bullet. He has short hair, no stubble to speak of, and a blunt nose. In violent scenes, his eyes go dead, and he has a strong, compact body, which he hurls through the frame, ricocheting off walls, windows, cars, and fences. In person, Damon is thoughtful and friendly, with a ready smile, and he has shown an increasing range as an actor. Sociable and fast-talking in "The Departed," he was glum and all but immobile in "The Good Shepherd." As the C.I.A. assassin Jason Bourne, however, Damon is a smooth and deadly object. His directors in the series—Doug Liman in "The Bourne Identity" and Paul Greengrass in "The Bourne Supremacy" and now "The Bourne Ultimatum"—have kept him almost continuously in motion, racing down streets and along corridors, leaping across rooftops. Bourne is intimate with many cities—Berlin, London, Paris, Madrid—and, incapable of hesitation, he runs without a stumble though their mazelike neighborhoods, markets, and railroad stations. No office or hotel-room door remains impenetrable; no safe remains locked. Robert Ludlum created the character—in his 1980 novel, "The Bourne Identity"—as a black-ops assassin whose brain had been wiped clean before he was programmed to kill. The writers who adapted Bourne for the screen (Tony Gilroy has been a constant, along with various collaborators) took over Ludlum's notion for the character while dropping his literary sludge; they enhanced Bourne's locomotive skills, and gave him a soul. This Jason Bourne is so anguished by his crimes that he develops amnesia, but he gradually remembers the bad things he has done, and is haunted by them.

Having participated in illegal operations, Bourne is a menace to the C.I.A., which has no further use for him and would like to be rid of him. The basic setup of all three movies is that the agency tracks his movements with banks of computers and surveillance equipment under the control of powerful people barking intel gibberish at one another, while Bourne tries to evade them and also the various goons, some working for the C.I.A., some not, who are trying to kill him. Eventually, he gets himself in a position to survey the surveyors and hunt the hunters. He has them under his control. But all he wants to do is reclaim himself from his induced oblivion. Summing up the first two films, Manohla Dargis (then at the Los Angeles *Times*) said that the drama of "Identity" was existential (Who am I?), and the drama of "Supremacy" was moral (What did I do?). I would say that the drama of "Ultimatum" is redemptive: How can I escape what I am? The creators of the black-ops program are shown to have used such techniques as hooding and waterboarding to break down and remake Bourne's personality, and he wants to find them. Commenting acidly on current interrogation techniques, the filmmakers suggest that such games were played with Americans as well as with outsiders. This may be a fiction, but it's a sinister thought. In the end, Bourne reaches the sadist who trained him—played by Albert Finney, whose voice is now so gravelly you could walk on it.

The material is formulaic, but, of all the current action franchises, this one is the most enjoyable. Cut off from the C.I.A. and from himself, Bourne has nothing to draw on but tradecraft and instinct. As Damon plays him—silent, wary—Bourne thinks with his body. He seems to have sensors attached to his limbs and his head, and he reacts instantly to threats. I used to be a purist about action sequences, demanding that bodies in combat be seen in full frame and without too much cutting. A few directors are still capable of that kind of classicism (Wolfgang Petersen in "Troy," David Cronenberg in "A History of Violence"), but Paul Greengrass, who also made the superb "United 93," shoots scenes in tiny fragments, and when he does it I see the point—the gain in speed and power is extraordinary. The camera trembles and shakes and hurtles in "Ultimatum," as if we were trapped inside the moving Bourne, and yet, on the fly, we see what we need to see. Gathering the fragments, Greengrass keeps some of the chase scenes going for ten minutes at a time. You come out of the movie both excited and soothed, as if your body had been worked on by felt-covered drumsticks.



Matt Damon as Jason Bourne in Paul Greengrass's movie.

FRANK STOCKTON

I doubt that Bourne will cease his wandering any time soon. Ludlum, having turned out the three "Bourne"s (among many other volumes), died in 2001, so the writer Eric Van Lustbader, none of whose books have ever been made into a movie, unselfishly stepped forward and committed a few extra "Bourne"s to keep the ball rolling. One of these productions, with the curious title "Robert Ludlum's The Bourne Betrayal," was published only a couple of months ago. I salute Lustbader's entrepreneurial energy, but why should he be the only one allowed to get in on the act? I haven't yet made a deal with the Ludlum estate, but I suggest the following titles: "The Bourne Topography" (Bourne prevents the C.I.A. from taking over the Kyzyl Kum Desert in Uzbekistan); "The Bourne Infarction" (Bourne causes a systemic breakdown at C.I.A. headquarters in Langley); and, my most ambitious idea, "The Bourne Arpeggio," in which Bourne, now a violist, prevents the assassination of a Russian dissenter at the reopening of Alice Tully Hall.

There isn't much that's factually new in "No End in Sight," Charles Ferguson's extraordinary documentary about the American occupation of Iraq—at least, not for people who have kept up with the best reporting on the war and have read such books as "Fiasco," by Thomas E. Ricks, and "The Assassins' Gate," by the *New Yorker* writer George Packer, who appears in the film. Yet we need to hear the story again and again, for no amount of rage and disbelief can turn what the Bush Administration did into someone else's problem. The occupation is our problem, a dead eagle hanging around our necks. Though the facts in "No End in Sight" are well known, the movie is still a classic.

Modest and attentive and quietly outraged, this collection of interviews, news footage, and narrated history gathers weight and strength and delivers, in chronological order, an overwhelming pattern of folly: In the run-up to the invasion of March, 2003, and then in the early months of the occupation, all the people who actually knew anything about Iraq and the Middle East—anyone who had serious experience in military, intelligence, or reconstruction work—were either ignored or dismissed by the Department of Defense, with White House backing. They were then replaced by ignorant and inexperienced ideologues who refused to hear what the knowledgeable told them. Ferguson establishes the disastrous thinking around such turning points as the decision not to stop the looting that followed the invasion; the de-Baathification of the professional classes of Iraq; and the disbanding of the Iraqi Army, which sent some half a million armed men into the streets. "No End in Sight" is an exposure of the psychopathology of power.

Ferguson earned a Ph.D. in political science from M.I.T., but went into Web design, only to sell his company to Microsoft, in 1996. He is one of the new plutocrats (Andrew Jarecki, of "Capturing the Friedmans," is another) who unaccountably refused to buy a vineyard in the Napa Valley and instead turned to filmmaking. He paid for the movie himself—it cost two million dollars—and hired some of the best talent he could find: the cinematographer Antonio Rossi, the composer Peter Nashel, and the documentary producer Alex Gibney, who advised him to hold down the rhetoric and build up the interview subjects so that they become real characters. No better counsel has ever been given to a first-time director and writer. Despite the often gruesome subject, this is an exceptionally elegant-looking film, and it provides what can only be called sensuous rewards. It's necessary for us to see, and feel, how utterly torn up Baghdad and Falluja and other sites in Iraq are. And it's moving to see the faces and hear the voices of the losers in the policy wars, including former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, who makes it clear, in his terse and guarded way, that he and his boss, Colin Powell, got exactly nowhere whenever they offered sane advice; General Jay Garner, the first American proconsul in Iraq, who was replaced by the fatuous L. Paul Bremer, and wishes that he had been able to fight harder against Bremer's decisions to disband the Iraqi military; and, most painfully, Colonel Paul Hughes, who was in touch with Iraqi officers commanding troops ready to maintain order in Baghdad, only to be shut down, from Washington, by Walter Slocombe, the senior adviser for national security and defense for the Coalition Provisional Authority. The madness continues: Slocombe, for example, still refuses, in an interview, to admit that the disbanding of the Army had anything to do with the insurgency. The bitterest revelation of "No End in Sight" is that the people who got it right are in agony, whereas the people who got it wrong are practically serene. ♦

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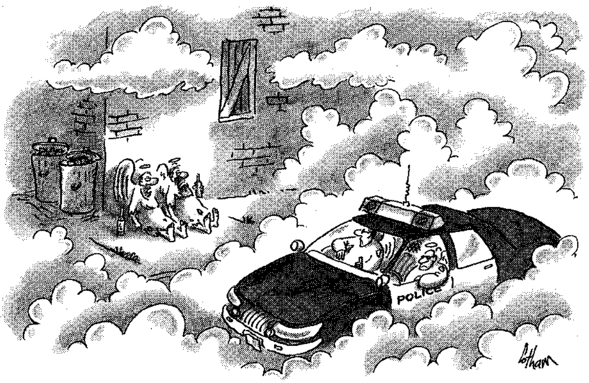
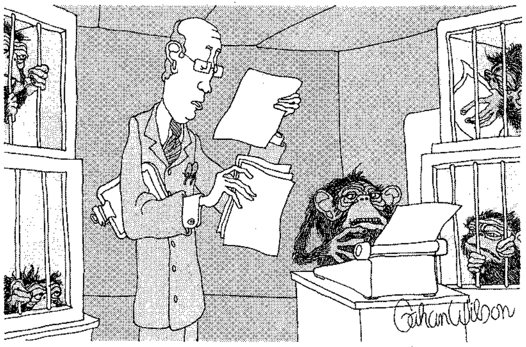
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Michael Maslin, must be received by Sunday, August 5th. Finalists in the July 23rd contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the August 20th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Except here it's always good cop, good cop."
Gary Rawitz, New York City



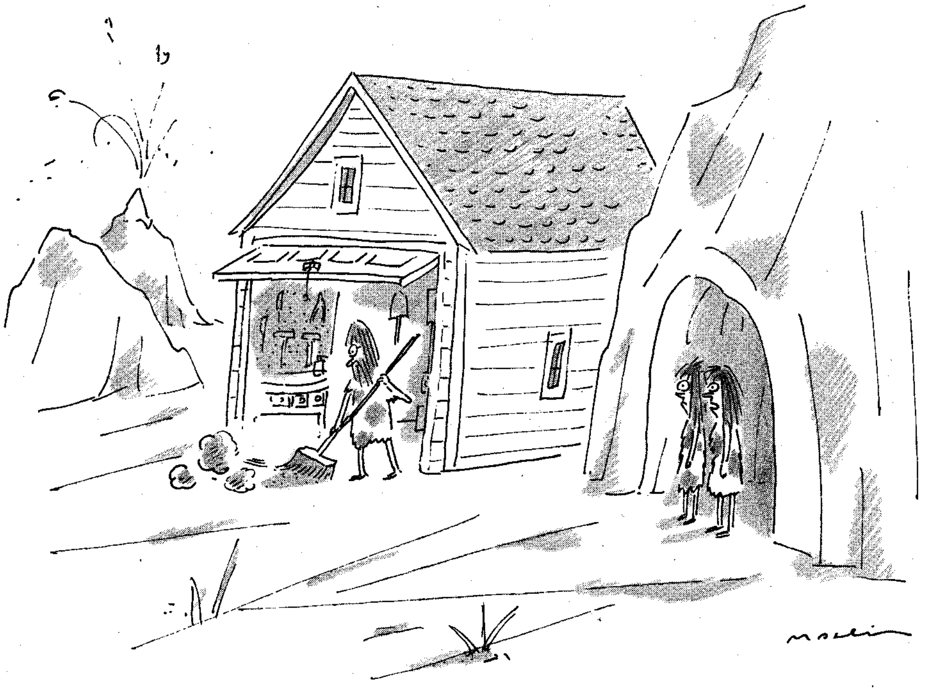
THE FINALISTS

"Have you considered writing this story in the third monkey rather than the first monkey?"
Robert Gray, Manchester Center, Vt.

"We'll have to run it by our infinite number of editors."
Douglas L. Saunders, Oakland, Calif.

"Sorry, guys. It's another rejection letter."
Sondra Frisch, Del Mar, Calif.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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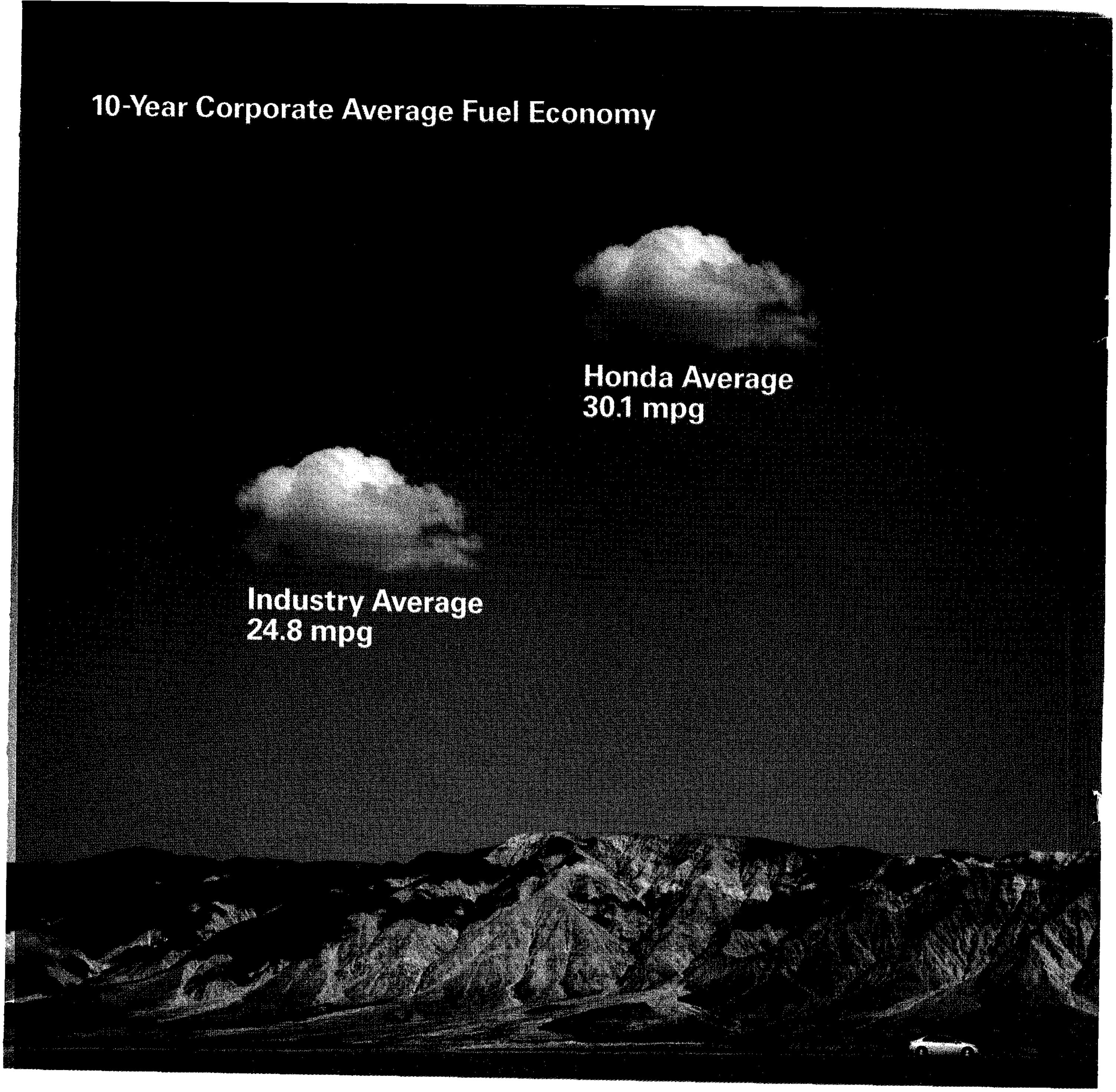

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